National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WHEN CULTURES COLLIDE: THE CINEMA OF PETER WEIR

by

Józef Marek HALTOF ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1995

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file   Votre référence

Our file   Notre référence

THE AUTHOR HAS GRANTED AN IRREVOCABLE NON-EXCLUSIVE LICENCE ALLOWING THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA TO REPRODUCE, LOAN, DISTRIBUTE OR SELL COPIES OF HIS/HER THESIS BY ANY MEANS AND IN ANY FORM OR FORMAT, MAKING THIS THESIS AVAILABLE TO INTERESTED PERSONS.

THE AUTHOR RETAINS OWNERSHIP OF THE COPYRIGHT IN HIS/HER THESIS. NEITHER THE THESIS NOR SUBSTANTIAL EXTRACTS FROM IT MAY BE PRINTED OR OTHERWISE REPRODUCED WITHOUT HIS/HER PERMISSION.

L'AUTEUR A ACCORDE UNE LICENCE IRREVOCABLE ET NON EXCLUSIVE PERMETTANT A LA BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE DU CANADA DE REPRODUIRE, PRETER, DISTRIBUER OU VENDRE DES COPIES DE SA THESE DE QUELQUE MANIERE ET SOUS QUELQUE FORME QUE CE SOIT POUR METTRE DES EXEMPLAIRES DE CETTE THESE A LA DISPOSITION DES PERSONNE INTERESSEES.

L'AUTEUR CONSERVE LA PROPRIETE DU DROIT D'AUTEUR QUI PROTEGE SA THESE. NI LA THESE NI DES EXTRAITS SUBSTANTIELS DE CELLE-CI NE DOIVENT ETRE IMPRIMES OU AUTREMENT REPRODUITS SANS SON AUTORISATION.

ISBN 0-612-06218-X

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LIBRARY RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: JÓZEF MAREK HALTOF

TITLE OF THESIS: WHEN CULTURES COLLIDE: THE CINEMA OF PETER WEIR

DEGREE: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

YEARS THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1995

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Department of Modern Languages
and Comparative Studies
University of Alberta
347 Arts
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2E6

6 September 1995

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "When Cultures Collide: The Cinema of Peter Weir" submitted by Józef Marek Haltof in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

E Możejko
Professor Edward Możejko

WK Beard
Professor William Beard

E.D. Blodgett
Professor E.D. Blodgett

Milan V. Dimić
Professor Milan Dimić

U Margolin
Professor Uri Margolin

E.D. Blodgett
Professor Brian McIlroy

Robert Wilson
Professor Robert Wilson

28 August 1995

ABSTRACT

The work examines films made by the Australian filmmaker, Peter Weir. Special attention is paid to his full-length films beginning with The Cars That Ate Paris (1974, Australia) and ending with Fearless (1993, USA). The purpose of the study, which employs the *auteur* concept and recent theoretical investigations of the poetics of cinema, is to produce the work of film criticism which deals broadly with the cinema of Weir.

The dissertation focuses on the themes, structures and cinematic devices that Weir employs in his films, as well as the cultural and ideological context of his films: intertextuality (literary and filmic sources, influences), political aspects and mythologies.

Weir is one of the few Australian film directors to have developed a distinctive, personal style; despite occasional variations, his films are linked stylistically, thematically and ideologically. Furthermore, they are structured around one fundamental conflict involving the clash of cultures. Weir creates a sense of mystery by confronting his characters with the supernatural and irrational within ordinary occurrences. The protagonist of Weir's films is usually the outsider who tries to overcome his inability to comprehend and communicate with a different culture. Confronted with a series of inexplicable events, the protagonist is often forced to deal with obscure incidents where the conventional mode of

understanding is completely useless. Weir is not interested in providing answers for the spectator; instead, he prefers to concentrate on the effects of clashes between people and cultures.

When Cultures Collide: The Cinema of Peter Weir consists of a methodological-*auteurist* chapter, a chapter on Weir and the Australian New Wave Cinema, 10 analytical chapters and a concluding section defining Weir's personal style.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who helped me, in one way or another, in writing this dissertation. First of all I am most grateful to my Supervisor, Professor Edward Możejko (University of Alberta), for years of professional encouragement and for valuable comments on the early version of the manuscript. I am also grateful for similar comments made by Professor Alicja Helman (Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland) and Dr. Neil Rattigan (University of New England in Armidale, Australia).

I am very grateful to the Members of my Doctoral Committee for their generous support and comments on the manuscript.

I am very thankful to my friends in the Department of Comparative Literature and Film Studies of the University of Alberta: Dr. Paul Morris, Dr. Bohdan Y. Nebesio and Dr. Waclaw Osadnik. I would like to acknowledge their encouragement, help on many levels and support. I would also like to thank Dr. Anton K. Kozlovic, who sent me research information and discussed various aspects of Weir's films with me, and Alice Nash who provided editorial assistance.

WHEN CULTURES COLLIDE: THE CINEMA OF PETER WEIR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1. "Producing" Author: The Concept of Authorship in Film Theory and Criticism....7

2. The Australian New Wave Cinema and Peter Weir....34

3. Weir's "Australian Gothic" (Michael, Homesdale, The Cars That Ate Paris, The Plumber)....50

4. Children in the Bush: Alien Orders and a New Continent in Picnic at Hanging Rock....72

5. Dreamtime and Real Time in The Last Wave....101

6. In Quest of Self-Identity: Gallipoli, Mateship and the Construction of Australian National Identity....122

7. Beyond Shadows: The Mysterious Orient and the Australian Psyche in The Year of Living Dangerously..150

8. Witness in the Amish Land....171

9. Jungle Utopia in The Mosquito Coast....193

10. *Carpe Diem*: Idealism Versus Realism in Dead Poets Society....213

11. A Parisian in America: Green Card....232

12. The Days After: Fearless....243

13. Peter Weir's Personal Style....256

Filmography....274

Bibliography....283

INTRODUCTION

The central focus of this study is to examine films made by the Australian filmmaker, Peter Weir. Special attention is paid to his ten full-length films beginning with The Cars That Ate Paris (1974, Australia) and ending with Fearless (1993, USA). The purpose of this dissertation is to produce a work of film criticism which deals broadly with the cinema of Weir.

My project, a product of a long-standing interest in Weir's cinema, draws upon two important approaches to film: the critical concept of *auteurism* set within a framework of the poetics of cinema. On the basis of a reformulated concept of *auteurism* I analyze films made by Weir. Specifically, my project focuses on the themes, structures and cinematic devices that Weir employs in his films, as well as the cultural and ideological context of his films: intertextuality (literary and filmic sources, mutual influences), political aspects and mythologies. Employing David Bordwell's schema, I may describe these factors in the following way,[1]

1/ Precompositional factors: literary and filmic sources, various influences, clichés;

2/ Compositional elements: structures and themes appearing in a series of works, cinematic devices;

3/ Postcompositional factors: critical reception and responses, distribution.

In spite of Weir's growing international reputation, there have been few attempts at a comprehensive analysis of his films. There are so far only one book[2] and two Ph.D. dissertations. The first dissertation narrowly focuses on the narrative aspect of Weir's cinema, the second constitutes a rhetorical analysis of Weir's Witness (1985).[3] My major objective is to fill this gap in film scholarship by writing a study on the cultural context of Weir's films. My dissertation differs clearly from the works mentioned above by:

1. Situating Weir's filmmaking in the context of the Australian New Wave;
2. Incorporating new materials, sources and films;
3. Paying special attention to the question of "Australianness;"
4. Re-examining Weir's importance for Australian as well as world cinema.

The first chapter concerns the notion of the author in contemporary film theory. This part also establishes the methodology and limitations of the study. The next chapter situates Peter Weir and his first short films within the context of the Australian New Wave.

The following chapters are primarily concerned with the cultural context of Weir's feature films. The purpose of these analyses is to search for and define the elements constituting Weir's personal style. Chapter 3, "Weir's Australian Gothic" focuses on Weir's early feature films starting with two medium-length films, Michael (1970) and Homesdale (1971). Stylistically as well as thematically they have many features in common with The Cars That Ate Paris (1974) and The Plumber (1978). These films belong to the prominent sub-genre within Australian cinema, "Australian Gothic." The next chapter, "Children in the Bush: Alien Orders and a New Continent in Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975)," discusses Weir's first internationally acclaimed film. Picnic at Hanging Rock expresses significant patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour characteristic of Australian society. This film is concerned with exploring the "spirit of Australia" and the clash between alien (British) orders with the spirit of the Australian land. "Dreamtime and Real Time" deals with The Last Wave (1977). This film, sometimes called an "anthropological thriller," presents the clash between the Western world of logic and the aboriginal tribal lore, between knowledge and magic, real time and "dreamtime." The Last Wave also belongs to a comparatively small group of Australian films dealing with the native inhabitants of Australia.

Chapter 6, "In Quest of Self-Identity: Gallipoli, Mateship and the Construction of Australian National Identity," discusses Weir's acclaimed film, Gallipoli (1981). Weir tries to explain the notion of "the Australian nation" by going back to, and examining such local stereotypes and mythologies as good Australians/bad foreigners, the myth of innocent Australia, the attributes of Australianness vs. Britishness. The next chapter deals with the concept of the "mysterious Orient" and the very typically Australian concept of doubleness, a result of Australia's colonial heritage and its present day isolation from the world. "Beyond Shadows: The Mysterious Orient and the Australian Psyche in The Year of Living Dangerously (1982)" deals with Weir's attempt to define the notion of Australianness by presenting Indonesia (Asia) as a missing part of Australia's completeness. The following chapter, "Witness in the Amish Land," focuses on Witness (1985), Weir's first film entirely set within American film genres and the American cultural context. It also centers on paradigmatic cultural clashes: the Amish/the rest of Americans; archaic/modern ways of life; country/city, etc.

Chapter 9, "Jungle Utopia" deals with The Mosquito Coast (1986), a film about a man driven by his perception of the American dream and also about his failure. The Mosquito Coast could be taken as the tragedy of a strong personality, a film destroying myths about individual omnipotence, as a critical variation on pioneer narratives. The subsequent chapter, "Carpe Diem: Idealism Versus Realism in Dead Poets Society (1989)," discusses the classic symbolism employed by Weir in this film. As in his early films, Weir confronts the protagonist, a newcomer from the outside world, with a world of unusual beauty whose conservative norms have long since been established. Confronted by an environment governed by its own principles, the newcomer (intruder) must fail in his attempts at rejuvenation. Chapter 11, "A Parisian in America," focuses on Green Card (1990). This is not only a comedy of manners, but also another variation on Weir's favourite theme, this time the cultural clash between French and American ways of life. The last analytical chapter, "The Days After: Fearless," discusses Fearless (1993), in which a plane crash replaces natural forces as the catalyst for conflict common to Weir's earlier works and prompts actions impossible under ordinary circumstances.

The concluding chapter, "Peter Weir's Personal Style," discusses the major elements employed by Weir to organize his films. Weir is one of the few Australian film directors to have developed a distinctive, personal style. In spite of the fact that Weir has been working within many genres and with different collaborators in Australia and America, his films are interlinked stylistically, thematically, and ideologically.

NOTES

1. David Bordwell, "Historical Poetics of Cinema," The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 376. In providing this typology, Bordwell acknowledges R.S. Crane's ideas elaborated in "Critical and Historical Principles of Literary History," The Idea of the Humanities 2 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1967), 45-156.

2. Don Shiach, The Films of Peter Weir: Visions of Alternative Realities (London: C. Letts, 1993).

3. Everett Eugene Corum, Tantalizing Ambiguity: The Cinema of Peter Weir. Ph.D. dissertation. Kansas: University of Kansas, 1990 and Wayne Joseph McMullen, A Rhetorical Analysis of Peter Weir's *Witness*. Ph.D. dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1989.

Chapter 1

"PRODUCING" *AUTEUR*:

The Concept of Authorship in Film Theory and Criticism.*

> Authorship is one way, but not the only way,
> of finding answers to the question, "who is speaking
> and to whom." Its survival may be explained
> by this provision, but it is not guaranteed.
>
> Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake[1]

The term "author" and the idea of authorship have a lengthy tradition throughout history. In spite of its many different interpretations the word "author" has always been associated with the individual subject whose authority is based on the works he or she has produced. When first employed in the Middle Ages, the term author (medieval *auctor*) already stressed not only a writer whose works demanded particular attention (stemming from divine revelation), but also a person who established principles and sanctioned "literary" discourse. The figure of the author has dominated and organized the discourse on the arts throughout time, most notably during the Romantic movement.

The French word *auteur* was introduced into the vocabulary of film criticism to emphasize that cinema is an art of individual, personal expression which is comparable to other creative activities. Promoting certain film directors to the status of author meant challenging existing modes of thinking about cinema as a phenomenon purely restricted to the domain of popular culture.

---

* A slightly different version of this chapter appeared in S--European Journal for Semiotic Studies 6 (1-2) 1994: 349-369.

The auteur policy (*la politique des auteurs*) was formulated and developed by the contributors to Cahiers du Cinéma at the beginning of the 1950s. Since that time, concern for the personal style and individual attributes of a directorial style have attracted increasing attention among film critics and theoreticians. However, early *auteurism* was a method of criticism rather than a theory. The concept of *auteur* as an evaluative tool, though useful, did not deal with analysis of particular films and authors. *Auteur* methodology called the director of a film the author, and looked for stylistic and thematic unity in works in order to prove authorship.

Alexandre Astruc's term *caméra stylo* (camera-pen), coined as early as 1948, though now only of historical importance, distinctly emphasizes that cinema has become a medium of artistic expression. In this respect, it is comparable to other arts, particularly painting and the novel.[2] A most representative essay by François Truffaut "A Certain Tendency of the French cinema" ("Une certaine tendance du cinéma français")[3] attacked directors who only illustrated scripts written by others (the so-called *metteurs en scène*) for their literariness, and proposed the original idea of the cinema of *auteurs*. In film criticism the *politique des auteurs* marks a shift towards the director/artist whose personality imprints a unique stamp on a series of works and whose presence is the source of meaning in the film.

André Bazin's view is opposite to that of his Cahiers colleagues. He argues that *auteurism* lacks historical and sociological context. Cahiers' attack on the cinema of "quality" and the policy of favouring certain filmmakers is too extreme for Bazin. In his critique of the *politique des auteurs*, Bazin maintains that the filmmaker ought to be a passive recorder of the outside world and not its manipulator.[4] Therefore, he favours *mise-en-scène* and admires certain Hollywood directors for their use of deep focus and long takes as opposed to the Soviet school of dynamic montage.

Cahiers' attack on French "quality" cinema (on Yves Allégret, Claude Autant-Lara and others) and admiration of some American directors working within the constraints of the Hollywood cinema (e.g., Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang) also mark a turn towards serious critical debates on the status of popular culture, more specifically, of films that have never been previously recognized as works of art. Movie critics in Britain (most notably Ian Cameron, Victor Perkins and Robin Wood) raise similar issues concerning the artistic value of popular cinema.

In the United States, the assertion that the director is the sole creator of the film was first and most ardently adopted by Andrew Sarris who renamed it "author theory." In his The American Cinema,[5] he employs the *auteur* concept to rank Hollywood directors (from the best "pantheon" directors to the least important "miscellaneous" ones) and to promote some of them to the status of author. *Auteurism* becomes an evaluative method. Sarris utilizes this concept to rewrite the history of American cinema in terms of its great authors (a history of *auteurs*) and to promote this cinema. He states that he regards

> the *auteur* theory primarily as a critical device for recording the history of the American cinema, the only cinema in the world worth exploring in depth beneath the frosting of a few great directors on top.[6]

While believing in the superiority of American cinema, Sarris does not deny the importance of the social conditions of film production. For him, there is a "tension" between the author and the material, between the authorial intention and the pressures working against individual expression. The task of *auteur-criticism*, to use Sarris' metaphor, is to detect trees where only an impenetrable forest was formerly perceived.

Since the beginning of the 1960s, the *auteur* concept, heavily influenced by structuralism (the so-called *auteur-structuralism* or *cine-structuralism*), has been used by a group of British film critics and theorists: Geoffrey

Nowell-Smith, Peter Wollen, Jim Kitses, Alan Lovell, and others. The *auteur* concept now focuses upon structures rather than evaluation. For example, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith published his Visconti (1967)[7] in which he attempts to rigorously study the hidden structures in Lucino Visconti's films.

As Peter Wollen points out in his structuralist study of authorship, "what the *auteur* theory does is to take a group of films - the work of one director - and analyze their structure."[8] The author, according to Wollen, is no longer a person, but a system of relations among a body of works bearing the same signature, a common denominator linking several films together. Alan Lovell clarifies in the following way:

> By the auteur principle I understand a descriptive method which seeks to establish not whether a director is a great director but what the basic structure of a director's work is. The assumption behind this principle is that any director creates his film on the basis of a central structure and that all his films can be seen as variations or developments of it.[9]

Lovell believes that the *auteur* principle is descriptive rather than assertive and evaluative. In other words, the hope of Lovell, Wollen and other cine-structuralists is to introduce Levi-Straussian structuralism into the debate on *auteurism* in order to prompt a shift from apologetic strategies (*auteur a priori*) to a more "scientific" strategy (*auteur a posteriori*). According to John Caughie, this is an evolution from "structuring" to "structured"[10] which is already evident in the difference in Wollen's 1969 and 1972 editions of Signs and Meanings in the Cinema. In the first edition John Ford functions merely as a structuring presence whereas in Wollen's 1972 postscript, he functions as a structure labelled "John Ford," a product of the critical analysis of a set of texts. This marks an evolution from the author as conscious originator of the film to the author as its structural effect.

Although *cine-structuralism* gains its "scientificity" by employing structuralist vocabulary and talking about a "set of binary oppositions" or the antinomic cluster of attitudes and meanings associated with the wilderness and the garden (Wollen, Kitses), it still remains, as Andrew Tudor states, a "pre-theory" or, "a methodological instruction."[11]

Empiricism and the lack of theoretical foundation is revealed not only by Charles Eckert's objection to the straightforward applications of Levi-Strauss methodology,[12] but also by Brian Henderson's meticulous critique of *cine-structuralism.*[13] First, as Henderson points out, the textual objects (films) are taken "as given." Secondly, the structuralists tend to separate the subject and the object of their study based on the assumption that both have been constituted *a priori*. For *auteurists* like Wollen, the film is a finished work of art, with a hidden structure that can only be uncovered by the author-oriented critic.

As Henderson correctly observes, despite its weaknesses, *auteur-structuralism* initiates a certain theoretical development and a new concept of film criticism. The author begins to be perceived as a discursive subject, that is, as a producer of meanings within films. The theoretical critique of *cine-structuralism*, stressing the recognition of a text as a combination of other texts and discourses, helps to shift the emphasis to the relationship between text and reader. Also, as Henderson points out,

> Empiricism is overthrown not only because the productivity of the text replaces the static object, intertextuality replaces structure, and the conjoined productivity of critical practice replaces the subject-object split and representation, but also because inquiry is no longer limited to the object itself, the given, but addresses what is there in light of what is not there.[14]

Cahiers du Cinéma's collective text, "John Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln,"[15] which can be seen as a critique of structuralist ideas in practice, serves as the best example of the study of the author as a discursive subject, produced by the film text. The film is regarded as a "text" consisting of a network of discourses. Its author, John Ford, is considered as a person not only contributing to the production of meaning, but also formed by language and historical codes.

The next stage of author theory, loosely described as the post-structuralist phase, emerged mainly with the development of film semiotics and psychoanalysis along with that of historical materialism influenced by the Althusserian notion of ideology. The film is approached as a textual system. The author is perceived not as a source of meaning, but as a term "negotiating" in the process of spectating (reading). With the development of film psychoanalysis, reshaped and reinforced by the writings of Jacques Lacan, the whole concept of the author was thrown into question. According to Stephen Heath, the author is "an effect of the text," the subject "constituted only in language and a language is by definition social, beyond any particular individuality."[16] Roland Barthes, whose thinking influenced that of Heath, puts it as follows: "it is language which speaks, not the author."[17]

The influence of the Lacanian definition of the unconscious structured like a language (every single utterance invaded by the unconscious), is evident in the writings of Christian Metz[18] and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith.[19] They raise the question of the relationship between the voyeuristic spectator and the subject of enunciation; between pleasure and ideology. John Caughie compares this type of theory of authorship to a kind of "theory of narratorship" whose focus becomes:

> to retrace the marks of the enunciating subject, the marks which constitute the film as a discourse, an ideological address rather than "just a story," and which determine the shifting positions and relations of the spectating subject within and to the text.[20]

In the title of his famous essay, "The Death of the Author,"[21] Roland Barthes pronounces the author dead and questions the possibility of the theory of an author.

For Barthes, literary criticism is "tyrannically" centered on the author; it focuses on biographical details which are intended to explain the nature and the true meaning of the text. The author (producer) is always the most important person in literature. Barthes wishes to turn our attention to the reader, a figure hidden in the shadow of the omnipresent author. In the history of literature the reader is without a past, a biography, and a psychology. The time has come, Barthes states, "to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."[22]

In this shift of emphasis from the producer to the receiver, Barthes' 1968 essay can be seen as representative of recent trends in literary and film studies. Nevertheless, in declaring the author's death, Barthes cannot avoid the notion of author. Barthes' basic assumption is that the author is the structuring principle of enunciation. Barthes postulates that serious *auteur* criticism must not be concerned with directorial intention (whether conscious or unconscious), and must not substitute intention for the text. In other words, Barthes rejects intentionality as a valid approach because it reduces the text to the psychology of the author:

> Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society,

> history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work: then the Author has been found, the text is "explained"- victory to the critic.[23]

Searching for authorial intention, however, has never played a major role in film criticism, certainly not since the beginning of the 1950's. Barthes' postulate of separating the text from its producer and of liberating serious studies from the "tyranny of the author" concerns literature more than cinema, especially that of America.

While Barthes rejects intentionality, he proposes the semiotic context for interpretation. The author's power, according to Barthes, lies in his ability to "mix writings, to counter the ones with others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them." To be an author does not necessarily mean to be original, because "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original," and can only "blend and clash" texts from a dictionary of pre-existent writings.[24] The text, Barthes argues, is a conglomerate of different quotations and styles coming from innumerable sources. In his A Lover's Discourse, Barthes focuses on the fading distinction between literature and criticism, between the writer and the reader (critic). In this introduction he also provides information about different sources constituting the discourse as well as his own position towards and within the text:

> In order to compose this amorous subject, pieces of various origin have been "put together". Some come

> from an ordinary reading, that of Goethe's Werther. Some come from insistent readings (Plato's Symposium, Zen, psychoanalysis, certain Mystics, Nietzsche, German lieder). Some come from conversations with friends. And there are some which come from my own life.[25]

Though Barthes declares that the author (as institution) is dead, he merely revives this concept by shifting emphasis from the author and not to the reader as one would expect, but to the critic. The author, "lost in the midst of the text,"[26] depends on the critic's ("scriptor's" - as Barthes would say) ability to find intertextual structures of the work. Barthes offers what Donald E. Pease names a new definition of literature: "a discursive game always arriving at the limits of its own rule, without any author other than the reader [...] who is defined as an effect of the writing game he activates."[27]

As a partial answer to Barthes' objection to the "author," the title of Michel Foucault's paper, "What Is an Author,"[28] emphasizes the existence of the author and discusses the important role that he plays in contemporary culture. Foucault's author emerges as a function rather than as an origin of discourse, a function of his texts (films): "[t]he function of the author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society."[29] Foucault stresses that although texts are produced by personalities, they also produce personalities. Viewed in this way, the notion of the author is strictly connected with works (films) that are made. It returns author-oriented studies from a "cult of personalities" to the texts themselves.

In his influential essay, Foucault also attempts to explain the consequences of the author's disappearance, specifically to examine the empty space left in our culture by the absence of the author. In so doing, Foucault points out that, if one were to take Barthes' call literally, it would be the end of our critical ability to deal with certain phenomena within a culture based on the author principle. The name of the author, as Foucault states, is "not simply an element of speech", but it "serves as means of classification," "establishes different forms of relationships among texts" and, finally, "characterizes a particular manner of existence of discourse."[30]

The existence of the author rules over our entire culture. It separates texts from others, characterizes their mode of existence and organizes discursive practices. Apart from the "author-function," Foucault distinguishes a different kind of author who occupies a "transdiscursive" position (e.g., Homer, Aristotle, the Church Fathers) by initiating discursive practices. Such authors not only produced their own works, but also created the possibility for other texts.

Foucault postulates another category, the so-called "fundamental" authors such as Marx and Freud who produced influential works, discontinuous with previous ones, which were "fundamental" in a double sense. First, they made possible differences within the field they established. Second, the reexamination of their works ("returns to the origins") does not alter their validity, but only reinforces the link between the predecessor and his followers. Sometimes, it transforms the understanding of the fundamental authors' basic ideas. Such returns, as Foucault stresses, are "an important component of discursive practices, form a relationship between 'fundamental' and mediate authors."[31]

Barthes and Foucault's post-structuralist critique of the idea of the author is now a commonplace of the deconstructionist mode. However, David Lodge argues, the post-structuralist declaration of the death of the author does not engender critical utopia. Rather, he states, this is a totalitarian concept very close to the situation described by George Orwell in Nineteen Eighty Four. Lodge comments upon Foucault's "new, brave world," where discourse would develop in anonymity without need for authors:

> It is however, difficult to understand how an anonymous discourse could ask of itself, who controls it. Certainly in Nineteen Eighty Four, when only anonymous discourse is allowed to circulate, none of Foucault's questions is permitted.[32]

At first glance, Foucault's attempt seems to discredit the idea of the author as a product of "bourgeois ideology." However, the approach stresses the importance of the author's function in our culture. The author's function becomes an entity assigned to fill the void produced by the disappearance of the traditional author. Janet Staiger in "The Death of the Reader" starts with Barthes' basic assumption about "the death of the author" and situates the discourse on the notion of the author in the broader perspective of current scholarship.[33] She views it particularly in the context of increased attention paid to the other side of the communication process, to the reader (or spectator for film), well documented by the growth of reception studies. In accordance with basic structuralist ideas, if Barthes' author is dead, states Staiger, so ought to be the reader.

Nevertheless, her essay does not deny Barthes' contribution to author studies, but centers on the current situation within reception studies, discusses its goals, scope and features. She rejects the notion of reception studies as a theory, a textual procedure, or a master theory (like e.g., semiotics or communication studies) which overlaps with other fields or theories. Instead, Staiger postulates a different understanding of reception studies (and, consequently, of the notion of the reader/spectator) and begins by characterizing them as historical, comparative and critical.

Unlike film theorists inspired by recent developments in semiotics and psychoanalysis, another group of scholars seems not to be influenced by the mainstream debate over *auteurism.* The Wisconsin-Madison School, led by David Bordwell and

Kristin Thompson, attempts to re-evaluate and to re-write not only the complex problem of authorship in film theory but film history and theory in general. They are trying to free film studies from the aura of "scientificity" (and from the "pseudo-scientific jargon" of their polemicists) imposed by the invasion of methods incompatible with the nature of cinema. They hope to introduce a new mode of theorizing in cinema: the historical poetics of cinema. Bordwell proposes a formalist critique of *auteurism* within the framework of a historical poetics of cinema. He defines this poetics as the study of how finished works of art (films) are constructed in order to elicit particular effects.[34]

Bordwell proposes to narrow the field of cinematic investigation by juxtaposing films against historically significant backgrounds, such as the mode of film production and composition that exists when films are made. He argues that only through the notion of norms, which are understood as prevailing standards and practices, can poetics be historical. For him, poetics is antidoctrinal, problem-oriented, and demands systematic research. Bordwell identifies three major domains of study: thematics, constructional form and stylistics.[35] Thematics focuses upon motifs, iconography and themes. Constructional form deals with "trans-media architectonic principles" governing the final form of the film. Stylistics refers to the materials and patterning of a film.

Poetics, defined neither as a theory, nor a method, but as "a set of assumptions, an angle of heuristic approach, and a way of asking questions,"[36] is directed against the dominant mode of theorizing in film studies: "Grand Theory" (the so-called SLAB theory), based on Saussurean Semiotics, Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism and Barthesian Textual Theory. Bordwell accuses the SLAB theorists of provincialism, unsystematic research, centring on doctrine and "telling stories". It is "a convenient way of not knowing a lot of things," he concludes in his symptomatic attack on the current state of film theory.[37] Instead, he promotes a new mode of theorizing: a neoformalist poetics.

Unlike SLAB theory, neoformalist poetics concentrates on historical context, narrative form, cinematic style and thematic interpretations. It marks a return to Russian and Czech thinkers (the Formalists and the Czech Structuralists) as is obvious from the name "neoformalism."

With the appearance of the Russian Formalists, the biographical method was not only discredited but also replaced by a text-oriented and later by a reader-oriented approach to literary history. In his well-known essay, "Literature and Biography," Boris Tomashevski asked whether theorists need the writer's biography in order to understand his artistic output.[38] Tomashevski and other Formalists, most notably Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, Roman Jakobson, and Yuri Tynianov, were interested in the stylistic and compositional devices discernible in texts which govern the production and reception of these texts. The object of their scientific investigation was not literature but "literariness" (literaturnost'). According to Roman Jakobson's often-quoted description, "The focus of literary study is not literature, but 'literariness,' that is, that which makes a given work a work of literature."[39]

The Formalist designation of literariness as the main focus of worthwhile literary investigation is mirrored in cinematic neoformalism with the emergence of the notion of "cinematicness." Thompson believes that,

> The theorist/critic may differentiate between aesthetic and nonaesthetic usages of filmic techniques; only the former constitutes cinematicness, and only films that employ such usage will be the object of neoformalist criticism.[40]

In her detailed analysis of Ivan the Terrible, Thompson does not apply the Formalist's theory directly to the film medium for two reasons. Apart from the obvious differences between literature and cinema, she rightly emphasizes that, though the Formalists were interested in cinema and made some valuable contributions to the field,[41] their adherence to purely literary methods prevented them from fruitful study of cinematic phenomena. Thompson emphasizes this stating that, "a strong suspicion exists that the Formalists were trying to get a grasp on an art form less familiar to them than literature."[42]

The Formalists as well as SLAB theorists failed to build a master system able to explain the nature of cinema. The neoformalist concern with film facts and their interpretation does not abandon the hope for systematic investigation of cinema. Rather, neoformalism offers a method less ambitious in scope and, consequently, more theoretically viable.

Neoformalism proposes not only a different concept of film studies, but also a different concept of the author. Bordwell's theory of authorship is derived from his concept of a historical poetics of cinema. He clarifies this in the study on Ozu:

> Filmmakers are rational agents according to conventions of filmic composition - what I shall call norms. The poetician makes those norms explicit as a way of explaining why films have certain features. This will involve describing a particular filmmaking practice by virtue of its preferred subjects, themes, genres, styles, and narrative principles.[43]

Bordwell provides a formalist critique of auteurism. In his Narration in the Fiction Film he emphasizes the importance of the author as a commercial strategy by showing his formal function within art cinema's mode:

> The concept of the author has a formal function it did not possess in the Hollywood studio system. Film journalism and criticism promote authors, as do film festivals, retrospectives, and academic film study [...] Thus the institutional "author" is available as a source of the formal operation of the film. Sometimes the film asks to be taken as autobiography, the filmmaker's confession [...] More broadly, the author becomes the real-world parallel to the narrational presence "who"

> communicates (what is the filmmaker saying?) and "who" expresses (what is the artist's personal vision?).[44]

The neoformalist critique of *auteurism* offered by Bordwell stresses that the author is a critical concept that organizes the process of production and reception of films. The authorial trademark, secured by the consistency of an authorial signature, not only constitutes an economically exploitable trademark, but also requires the spectator/critic to perceive the film as a part of the authorial oeuvre. Particular motifs, camera techniques, and narrational qualities usually help to create the trademark signature.

Bordwell prefers to emphasize formal "uses" for the author at the expense of expressivity. The author becomes a formal function and a source of the formal operation of the film. In commenting upon Dreyer's films, Bordwell states, that it is not enough to claim that the "author" is a group of films - the belief that replaced the author as person. For Bordwell, Dreyer's historical status involves not only the films, but the "Dreyerian." As for the literary historian, the Byronic is more important than Byron, Shavianism more than Shaw. The author thus becomes an ideal figure, not merely a group of films bearing his signature.[45]

Bordwell attempts to analyze Dreyer's artistic output by drawing on the insights of the Russian Formalists and their followers. He shows the importance of formal and perceptual, rather than thematic, elements constituting an author's *oeuvre*. He states,

> Instead of assuming order and then clamping down a certain interpretative apparatus, we might look at these films as presenting problems of order and problems of interpretation. We might posit them as dynamic totalities, in which several formal systems operate - sometimes harmoniously, sometimes dissonantly.[46]

In his study on Dreyer, Bordwell also employs the Formalists' concept of "defamiliarization," "estrangement" ("ostranienie"--the term coined by Viktor Shklovsky) to understand and, consequently, to explain the "strangeness" of Dreyer's films. Critics usually look for unities and coherence in a text in order to "tame," and "domesticate" a given artistic product, at the same time, ignoring disunity and incoherence. Following the Russian Formalists, Bordwell believes that questions of unity and of disunity are equally important--the concept of the constant struggle between a stable unity and dynamic defamiliarization, a breaking of conventions, help us understand art and its evolution.

Ozu's films are approached by Bordwell from the perspective of historical poetics of cinema. He situates Ozu's stylistic choices, his use of genre conventions and dramaturgical strategies within Japanese film production of that time. By employing a formal approach to Ozu's films, and to Ozu as a filmmaker and as a historical individual, Bordwell grants a different kind of knowledge to Ozu's works. He contextualizes the biographical legend of Ozu as a filmmaker and attempts to answer the question dealing with the director's "Japaneseness." Bordwell rejects the opinion that Ozu's poetics is strongly influenced by the mode of the film practice of his period.

* * *

To summarize, in film criticism, *auteurism* established a model which dominated the critical reception of films for nearly three decades. Functioning as an interpretive category, *auteurism* in practice governs the way a movie is approached and received. In film theory, the evolution of authorship has been marked by a long-standing debate with often contradictory voices. This debate ranges from romantic notions of the author/director as in full control of the cinematic process, through the structuralist notion of a closed system (director's *oeuvre*), to positions of formalist criticism largely rooted in neglected writings of earlier, mostly Slavic, theoreticians, and Barthes' symptomatic but desperate declaration of the author's death. *La politique des auteurs* evolved as a critical policy which asserted that the director is the artist and creator of the film. This helped to move film criticism from "impressionistic" writings to the evaluation of *auteurs* and genres as the basic critical activity. Later, when the concept of the singular, visionary artist started to be problematic, *auteurist* critics attempted to link evaluation with analysis. The thematic and visual motifs were the author's signature. With *cine-structuralism* and the influence of the "Grand Theory" (as Bordwell would say), the author became the structuring principle of enunciation and an "effect of the text." Barthes' attack on the institution of the author unsuccessfully attempted to create a new star: the reader/critic.

Despite many differences, all theories of authorship share explicitly or implicitly a basic assumption about the author as the originator of discourse. Timothy Corrigan suggests that today's authors are increasingly situated "along an extratextual path, in which their commercial status as *auteurs* is their chief function as *auteurs*."[47] Filmic authors (mostly directors) enjoy the status of a star and are consumed as such:

> An *auteur* film today seems to aspire more and more to a critical tautology, capable of being understood and consumed without being seen. Like an Andy Warhol movie, it can communicate a great deal for a large number of audience who know the maker's reputation but have never seen the films themselves.[48]

Corrigan postulates a revaluation of *auteurism*: the author can be perceived in line with the conditions of a "cultural and commercial intersubjectivity, a social interaction distinct from an intentional causality or textual transcendence."[49]

In sum, the debate over *auteurism* proceeds on two apparently separate levels: critical, where authorship serves as a means of filmic classification and differentiation, and theoretical, dealing with the "semiotic density" of the text and with the potential for tension (as well as collusion) between the different professional collaborators on an audio-visual text. In practice, these two levels have little impact on each other, though both critical and theoretical discourses have the same goal: a search for an identity, an answer to the question "who is speaking, to whom and about what?"

THE CONSTRUCTION OF PETER WEIR

I analyze films grouped under the name of "Peter Weir," works bearing his name. In film criticism, the name "Weir" functions as a set of critical procedures and also as a set of techniques which create a specific visual style, designated as Weir's "authorial style." I examine "Weir" as a figure created by his films, in line with Michel Foucault's concept of the author as a function of his texts (films). I deal with the existence of a presence named "Peter Weir."

Thus, in my approach I am not preoccupied with Weir's artistic biography or his real biography but in Weir as a figure emerging from films authored by him. I search for the image of Weir hidden in the films signed by him; I look for and try to define his individual style.

In any *auteurist* approach it is difficult to avoid criteria like the question of intentionality and authorial will. It is almost impossible not to look for authorial consciousness, homogeneity and evolution. It is easy to neglect social context and external forces contributing to the process of film production.

My own use of *auteur* methodology is concerned with the analysis of structures, themes and cinematic devices employed by Weir in his works. While I remain cognizant of the important contributions of others involved in film production, in my approach the question of whether the director has had full control over his work and the problem of contributors and their effect on it is not of great importance. The director's work is a synthetic one, which combines various contributions into a structural whole and determines the final form of the work. In spite of the fact that Weir has been working within many genres and with different collaborators in Australia and America, his films are linked stylistically, thematically, and ideologically.

NOTES

1. Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, Film Theory: An Introduction (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988), 128.

2. Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Wave Avant-Garde: 'La Caméra Stylo,'" The New Wave ed. Peter Graham (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968).

3. François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," Movies and Methods ed. Bill Nichols (Los Angeles and London: U of California P, 1976), 224-237.

4. Andre Bazin, "La politique des auteurs," The New Wave ed. Peter Graham (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 155

5. Andrew Sarris, The American Cinema (New York: Dutton, 1968).

6. Andrew Sarris, Film Culture 27 (Winter 1962-3), reprinted in Perspectives on the Study of Film, ed. John Stuart Katz (Boston: Little Brown, 1971), 134.

7. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Visconti (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968).

8. Peter Wollen, Signs and Meanings in the Cinema (London: Secker and Warburg, 1969), 104.

9. Alan Lovell, "Robin Wood--A Dissenting View," Screen 10 (2) 1969: 47-48.

10. John Caughie ed., Theories of Authorship: A Reader (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 127.

11. Andrew Tudor, Theories of Film (London: Secker and Warburg in association with the BFI, 1974), 131.

12. Charles Eckert, "The English Cine-Structuralists," Theories of Authorship, 152-165.

13. Brian Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism," Theories of Authorship, 166-183.

14. Ibid., 180.

15. Cahiers du Cinéma editors, "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*," Cahiers du Cinema 223, August 1970.

16. Stephen Heath, "Comment on 'The Idea of Authorship,'" Theories of Authorship, 215.

17. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, transl. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 143.

18. Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, transl. by Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford UP, 1974).

19. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "A Note on 'History/Discourse,'" *Theories of Authorship*, 232-241.

20. Caughie, *Theories of Authorship*, 202.

21. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977). All quotations from *Theories of Authorship*, 208-213.

22. Ibid., 213.

23. Ibid., 212.

24. Ibid., 211.

25. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 8.

26. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 27.

27. Donald E. Pease, "Author," *Critical Terms for Literary Studies* ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago, London: U of Chicago P, 1990), 112.

28. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1977), 114-138 (All quotes from this edition).

29. Ibid., 124.

30. Ibid., 123.

31. Ibid., 136.

32. David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), 157.

33. Janet Staiger, "Reception Studies: The Death of the Reader," *The Cinematic Text. Methods and Approaches* ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 353-367.

34. David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), 1 and 5.

35. David Bordwell, "Historical Poetics of Cinema," *The Cinematic Text*, 379.

36. Ibid., 375-6.

37. Ibid., 390.

38. Boris Tomashevski, "Literature and Biography," *Readings in Russian Poetics* ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT, 1971), 45-55.

39. Roman Jakobson, quoted from: Douwe W. Fokkema and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London: C. Hurst, 1977), 17.

40. Kristin Thompson, *Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible: A Neoformalist Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), 30.

41. For example, Boris Eikhenbaum, ed., *Poetika kino* (*Poetics of Cinema*) (Moscow-Leningrad: Kinopecat, 1927).

42. Thompson, *Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible*, 31.

43. David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, 21.

44. David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986), 24.

45. David Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1981), 4.

46. Ibid., 3.

47. Timothy Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism: A Voice Without Authority," *New German Critique* 49 (1990): 48.

48. Ibid., 50.

49. Ibid., 47.

Chapter 2

PETER WEIR AND THE AUSTRALIAN NEW WAVE CINEMA

In film criticism, Peter Weir's name is usually inseparable from the Australian film renaissance of the 1970s. His second feature film, Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975), was a turning point in the development of the new cinema in Australia, as well as in establishing Weir's international reputation. He emerged not only as a competent craftsman but also as an *auteur* whose personal stamp characterized his early endeavors. Furthermore, Picnic at Hanging Rock and other films directed by Weir were, critically and in terms of the box-office, among the most successful Australian films of the "New Wave" period.

Weir's artistic biography has to be read through the prism of the Australian film revival of the 1970s. In a sense he both contributed to and is a product of this period of enormous artistic activity. Also, in many respects, Weir's artistic biography resembles that of many of his New Wave friends; they all share similar generational experiences and a very "sixties sensibility;" they started their careers first with short films produced in the mid-sixties and moved to mainstream feature filmmaking in the mid-seventies. The majority of them, like Weir, Gillian Armstrong, Bruce Beresford, Phillip Noyce and Fred Schepisi pursue their professional careers in the United States, only periodically returning to their home country.

In describing the development of Weir's filmmaking art, I am going to focus primarily on works he made, limiting myself only to a few basic biographical details. Weir's private life remains essentially private; what is known comes from several major interviews in which basic biographical details, his fascinations, anecdotes, filmic and literary inspirations are repeated by the director.

Peter Weir was born in Sydney on 21 August 1944, a fourth generation Australian whose ancestors were immigrants from Ireland, England and Scotland. He attended Vaucluse High, Scots College and, then, entered the University of Sydney where he started to study Arts and Law. In interviews, Weir emphasizes his aversion to formal education systems which are "industrialized" and kill sensibility. He dropped out of university before finishing the first year and, at the age of nineteen, entered his father's one-man real estate business. In 1965, with the money he made and following the footsteps of many other young Australians, he visited Europe. On his way to England, on the Greek liner "Patris" heading for Piraeus, he had an opportunity to produce with friends his first shows on a closed circuit television on board, which were inspired by the then famous Australian television program The Mavis Bramston Show.

Having returned from Europe, Weir decided to pursue a television career. At that time he did not consider a future in filmmaking; he neither was a filmgoer, nor possessed any theoretical or practical knowledge of the craft. "I was not exposed to any film culture in my teens," recalls Weir.[1] Like most of other would-be filmmakers of his generation he was not cognizant of either Australia's past filmic achievements or European filmmaking and was brought up essentially on popular Hollywood cinema.

In 1967 Weir joined television Channel Seven in Sydney as a stagehand and started producing amateur revues. His friendship with the actor-writer Grahame Bond and the facilities provided by the Channel Seven Social Club helped Weir to produce his first short film. Count Vim's Last Exercise (1967), a 15 minutes offbeat comedy intended as a phoney government propaganda film, was met with considerable interest and allowed Weir to make another film. The following year he made his second short film, a parody of religious cults, The Life and Flight of the Rev. Buck Shotte, about an eccentric American preacher and his new religion. The film was accepted for screening at the 1969 Sydney Film Festival but then withdrawn by Weir to protest the censor's ban of the Swedish film I Love, You Love by Stig Björkman.

After the initial success of these first two films, Weir was able to direct film clips for the satirical television revue, The Mavis Bramston Show. In 1969 he joined the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit (ACFU, in 1973 replaced by Film Australia) as an assistant cameraman and production assistant. Nominally hired as a director, Weir found himself in a major training-ground for aspiring filmmakers before the establishment of the Australian Film and Television School in 1973. "It was like a school [...]. It was the university that I had looked for in 1963" - he emphasizes in the 1984 interview.[2] Like many of the later well-known New Wave filmmakers, for example Donald Crombie, Arch Nicholson and Michael Thornhill, Weir had been given an opportunity to learn the craft of directing, to work with bigger budgets in an atmosphere of considerable artistic freedom.

In 1970 Weir directed the filmic novella (Michael) for an important three-part ACFU production Three to Go. Two other parts were directed by Brian Hannant and Oliver Howes, also associated with the ACFU. Michael was followed by an equally successful medium-length movie, Homesdale (1971), for the Experimental Film and Television Fund (EFTF). Weir spent the next year on a travel grant in Europe writing scripts for his future films and learning the craft on feature film sets in England.

After his return to Australia Weir continued his work for ACFU on a series of short films in color designed as teaching aids. The first one, Stirring a Pool, made before his trip to

Europe, a part of the Case Studies in Supervision series, is a didactic training film with an early appearance by the future Australian star - Judy Morris, then starting her career. This six minute film was followed in 1972 by a group of equally short apprenticeship films, also dealing with executive-personnel relations: Boat Building, The Billiond Room, The Computer Centre and The Field Day. Australian Colour Diary No. 43: Three Directions in Australian Pop Music, another film produced by ACFU in 1972, is a glance at developments on the Australian pop-music scene.

Incredible Floridas (1972) and Whatever Happened to Green Valley (1973), both films produced by the successor of ACFU, Film Australia, are among Weir's most important documentaries of that time. The former, a twelve minute documentary, is a study of the Australian composer, Richard Meale, and his work Incredible Floridas, a homage to Arthur Rimbaud, whose poetry supplies the title of the piece.

Whatever Happened to Green Valley concerns a Housing Commission Estate (Green Valley) twenty five miles West of Sydney, inhabited by about thirty thousand people. Supplied with Film Australia equipment, the residents are invited to show themselves, their families and their everyday lives. Five residents then present their own views about the valley. Weir's documentary contains the director's own grotesque vision of Green Valley (which is not green at all), the residents' films, and a final community-based discussion.

Whatever Happened to Green Valley, scripted and directed by Weir and with his presence on the screen, is an original example of a documentary about the documentary, a *cinéma-verité* experiment.

After making a number of short films and documentaries Weir directed his first feature film, The Cars That Ate Paris (1974), sponsored by the Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC). The period between the making of Count Vim's Last Exercise and the commercial release of his first feature (from 1967 to 1974) was very important for his artistic development: during this time Weir gained increased familiarity with and knowledge of the craft of filmmaking. For a self-taught filmmaker, this was a period of training. These early films, although amateurish in status and style, were important first steps towards artistic maturity. They also exhibited interests which would become later the focus of his widely known films. Weir's international career began with his next breakthrough film, Picnic at Hanging Rock.

Weir's filmmaking career was made possible in part due to the stimulating atmosphere of the early seventies in Australia. After years of artistic inertia, the year 1970 brought a number of important political decisions which greatly influenced the future shape of the local film industry. With the establishment of the Australian Film Development Corporation (in 1975 to become the Australian Film

Commission, AFC), the Experimental Film and Television Fund, and with the announcement of the establishment of the Australian Film and Television School in Sydney (founded in 1973), the most interesting period for the national film industry in Australia began. The importance of the Film School in Sydney becomes visible in the second phase of the New Wave thanks to films made by its first talented graduates, Gillian Armstrong and Phillip Noyce.

The Australian feature film industry in the seventies was largely a creation of government policy. Filmmakers and producers relied heavily on funding providing by government institutions, which, particularly in the first phase of the development of national cinema, were generous in sponsoring films with Australian content. Cinema was treated as a "national project"; the financial aspect was of secondary importance at that time. There was, however, a price to pay in order to promote "Australianness." As David Stratton notices, by 1980 only approximately 16 per cent of locally-produced films brought some profit and 49 per cent were box-office failures.[3]

The terms "revival" and "renaissance," frequently applied to the Australian cinema of the 1970s, suggest a re-birth, rather than humble beginnings. Feature films had been produced prior to 1970 in Australia, although at that time there was little sense of continuity between a promising start at the beginning of this century and the New Australian Cinema. Weir and his colleagues, predominantly exposed to American cinema, were largely unaware of the local filmic past. Nevertheless, the cinema in Australia, which started with the filming of the 1896 Melbourne Cup horse race, has a history essentially as long as cinemas elsewhere, and, perhaps, in the early years as significant. An Australian Salvation Army Film, Soldiers of the Cross (1900), which was a combination of slides, film, music and spoken word, is sometimes purported to be the first full-length feature in the world. A similar claim is made about Charles Tait's The Story of the Ned Kelly Gang (1906) which was probably the longest narrative film to that date in the world.[4] This film originated a distinct Australian genre, the bushranger genre, of films with mythical Ned Kelly and other bandits from the bush. This form was very vibrant until its suppression by the New South Wales police in 1912, under the claim that it encouraged anti-social behaviour.

During World War I, several films promoting the war effort and popular with local audiences were made with financial assistance from the military. Alfred Rolfe's A Hero of the Dardanelles (1915), for example, exploits the Gallipoli campaign, an event of mythical significance for Australians.

After the war, and in spite of the increasing influence of Hollywood, some of the best Australian silent films were made by Franklyn Barrett (The Breaking of the Drought, 1920 and The Girl of the Bush, 1921) and, in particular, by Raymond

Longford. In 1919 Longford, with the participation of his partner, the actress-director Lottie Lyell, created The Sentimental Bloke and one year later On Our Selection. The former one especially, is deservedly celebrated for its stylistic and technical mastery as well as for its Australiana: the use of the vernacular, colloquial humor and naturalism of the Woolloomooloo (Sydney's working-class area) scenes.

During the late twenties and the thirties, with the arrival of sound, the local film industry declined. With some notable exceptions, for instance, films made by the McDonagh sisters (The Cheaters, 1930), Ken G. Hall (his new version of On Our Selection, 1932) and Charles Chauvel (Forty Thousand Horsemen, 1940, and The Rats of Tobruk, 1944), Australia became a cheap location for foreign, British and American films while its landscape served as an exotic backdrop for "foreign narratives." There were, however, exceptions in this case as well: the British Ealing Company's presence in Australia resulted in one of the most interesting films of that time, The Overlanders (1946) by Harry Watt.

Efforts to revive film production in Australia failed. During the fifties and the sixties only a few locally financed feature films were completed, for example, John Heyer's The Back of Beyond (1954) and Cecil Holmes' trilogy on mateship Three in One (1956). Between 1962 and 1965 no film was produced in Australia. Tom Fitzgerald (writing under the pen name Tom Weir) commented on this situation in the influential journal Nation: "[...] our voices are thin and so weakly articulated as to be barely audible to visitors when they step ashore. The daydreams we get from celluloid are not Australian daydreams."[5]

In 1963 a Senate Committee, known as the Vincent Committee after its chair, Senator V.S. Vincent, provided several recommendations for the future development of the national cinema. Although ignored by the Liberal Government led by Robert Menzies, these proposals later played a significant role in encouraging government intervention in the Australian film industry.

As early as in 1967, the popular success of They're a Weird Mob by Michael Powell proved the growing demand for films speaking a distinct Australian idiom. Independent, personal productions such as Time in Summer (1968) by Ludwik Dutkiewicz, Tim Burstall's better known 2000 Weeks (1969) and other independent productions in Melbourne ("Carlton Cinema") and in Sydney ("Ubu Films") had shown the artistic potential of the local cinema in Australia.

In the late sixties, government intervention in the film industry created a new era in Australian cinema. A Labor Federal Government headed by John Gorton and, later, by Gough Whitlam changed the period of relative inactivity. Almost all films of the seventies were made with government money. Together with the state governments, the federal government began investing in film and promoting "culturally worthwhile" films, giving Australia not only recognition but a sense of cultural distinctness. In 1973 the first state film company, the South Australian Film Corporation, was established, known for its involvement in such films as *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975) and *Storm Boy* (1976). The Corporation also produced Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Plumber* (1978) and contributed to the production of his *The Last Wave* (1977) and *Gallipoli* (1981).

The reemergence of the national cinema was also due to the increasing interest in cinema in general and the history of local cinema in particular. This was evidenced by the appearance of the first film programs at universities, the first cinema journals (*Cinema Papers* from 1974) and in 1970 the publication of the first book on Australian cinema.[6] Apart from that, a strong film lobby pressed the government to establish the legal basis for a national cinema. In a series of articles published in prominent Australian journals, Phillip Adams, Colin Bennett, Sylvia Lawson, Michael Thornhill and others opted for government intervention and the creation of government bodies responsible for sponsoring the local film industry.

Due to the government's involvement in the seventies, 153 feature films were made, compared with 5 at the beginning of the century, 163 in 1910s, 90 in the twenties, 51 in the thirties, 19 in the forties, 25 in the fifties, only 17 in the sixties and 335 in the eighties. By American standards Australian films from the seventies were mostly low budget films (an average of 300-400 thousand Australian dollars), which created a chance to rely on a local market and on the local audience which sympathetically supported local films. Between 1970 (an introduction of many government programs) and 1988 (the date of the demise of the 10BA tax concessions paragraph) about 350 feature films, 150 telemovies and 100 mini-series were made.[7]

The first Australian films of the seventies to reach an international audience were foreign productions dealing with Australian mythology. Tony Richardson's abortive attempt to revitalize the bushranger genre, Ned Kelly (1970), Nicolas Roeg's Walkabout and Ted Kotcheff's Wake in Fright (U.S. title: Outback) both released in 1971, looked at the unique, austere qualities of the Australian landscape and called the world's attention to the reemergence of cinema there.

It is only since 1975 that we can speak of an Australian film renaissance. Ken Hannam's Sunday Too Far Away and Peter Weir's Picnic at Hanging Rock were released in that year and received significant recognition in Australia and overseas. These two films were followed by a group of other distinguished productions, often called "nostalgia," "history" or AFC (Australian Film Commission) films.[8] The best known are: Don Crombie's Caddie (1976) and The Irishman (1978), Bruce Beresford's The Getting of Wisdom (1977) and Breaker

Morant (1980), Fred Schepisi's *The Devil's Playground* (1976) and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978), Phillip Noyce's *Newsfront* (1978), Gillian Armstrong's *My Brilliant Career* (1979) and Weir's *Gallipoli* (1981).

These and other films were not only commercial successes but also became internationally known as the "Australian New Wave." Weir's name emerged as virtually synonymous with this period of outburst in creative energy. Looking back at the beginning of his career Weir states: "I enjoyed the comfort and the firepower of the studio picture, and I was dealing with amazingly professional people who were also extremely generous in the creative area of leaving it to me. I was really my own worst enemy."[9]

The emergence of Australian New Wave films coincides with discussions concerning the national image of Australia. The nationalism offered by these films clearly differs from the one projected by the preceding group of works, the so-called "ocker films," such as Bruce Beresford's *Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972) or Tim Burstall's *Alvin Purple* (1973) and *Petersen* (1974). The "ocker films" celebrated contemporary urban heroes (ockers) with their vernacular, characteristically vulgar behaviour and masculine habits. These popular films were attempted for the Australian market and successfully competed with Hollywood products. The New Wave films were mostly period films defining nationhood not only by its current mythologies and realities, but by locating the discourse on the meaning of the Australian nation in the colonial past and during the first years of independence.

Australian films of the 1970s, including Weir's Australian-made films, took part in a "building-a-nation" process, in "inventing Australia" as Richard White puts it in the very title of his seminal book.[10] The "AFC films" reinforced the principal myths of Australian national identity such as the myth of the bush and its inhabitant, the bushman, the myth of mateship, and the Anzac legend. The purpose of this endeavour was to create an acceptable image of Australia and to promote it overseas. Mythological dimensions were of greater importance here than historical accuracy or truth. As Ina Bertrand bluntly stated: "Truth is not an issue here. As a nation we can live without 'truth': perhaps we prefer not to know if the truth is unpleasant or, even worse, boring. But we cannot continue to exist without a sense of self, identity, in this case 'Australianness.'"[11]

Of course, it would be incorrect to speak of Australian New Wave cinema as if there were only one monolithic kind of the local cinema. This was not a single, homogeneous industry, but, on the contrary, a diverse cinema ranging from Beresford's "ocker" comedies, Paul Cox's "art cinema" to George (Mad Max) Miller's futuristic nightmares. It is possible, however, to name the dominant trends closely associated with two major influences on Australian cinema: European "art" cinema and classic Hollywood cinematic style:

both influences are discernible in Weir's productions. Picnic at Hanging Rock, for instance, was modelled on European art cinema represented by, among others, the Swedish film, Elvira Madigan (1967), by Bo Widerberg, which enjoyed extreme popularity in Australia.

The influence of classic Hollywood filmmaking is visible in particular in the context of the second stage of the development of modern Australian cinema, mostly in "popular" cinema. The Mad Max series, for instance, is an Australian reworking of the Hollywood action narratives found in such popular genres as science fiction, the western and crime film. Weir's The Cars That Ate Paris and The Year of Living Dangerously in particular, although not typical genre films, were also influenced by Hollywood filmmaking.

NOTES

1. Pat McGilligan, "Under Weir and Theroux," Film Comment 22 (6) 1986: 26.

2. Sue Mathews, 35 mm Dreams: Conversations with Five Directors about the Australian Film Revival (Melbourne: Penguin, 1984), 85.

3. David Stratton, The Last New Wave: The Australian Film Revival (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1980), 294.

4. See, for example, Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years (Sydney: Currency, 1983), 12-14 and 16-19.

5. Tom Weir [Tom Fitzgerald], "No Daydreams of Our Own: The Film as National Self-Expression." (1958; reprint in:) Australian Film Reader, ed. Albert Morant and Tom O'Regan (Sydney: Currency, 1985), 144.

6. John Baxter, The Australian Cinema (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970).

7. "Analysis of the Performance of Australian Films Since 1980," Australian Film Commission (1991). Quoted from: Elizabeth Jacka, "Film," The Media in Australia: Industries, Texts, Audiences, ed. Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 74.

8. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, The Screening of Australia: Anatomy of a National Cinema (Sydney: Currency, 1988), 28-37.

9. Michael Dempsey, "Inexplicable Feelings: An Interview with Peter Weir," Film Quarterly 33 (4) 1980: 5.

10. Richard White, Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981).

11. Ina Bertrand, "'National Identity'/'National History'/'National Film': The Australian Experience," Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 4 (2) 1984: 181.

Chapter 3

WEIR'S "AUSTRALIAN GOTHIC":

Michael, Homesdale, The Cars That Ate Paris, The Plumber

The terrifying thing in those early films
was not knowing why something had worked,
even more than understanding
why something hadn't worked.

Peter Weir[1]

The first major success for Peter Weir came with his short film Michael, released in 1970, the second part of the trilogy Three to Go made by the Commonwealth Film Unit. The films, directed by Brian Hannant (Judy), Oliver Howes (Toula) and Weir's Michael, were built around the problems of contemporary young Australians. Michael won the Grand Prix of the Australian Film Institute in 1970.

Produced and supervised by Gil Brealey, Three to Go was the culmination of the Commonwealth Film Unit's attempts at creating a local film industry. In their indispensable history of the Australian film industry, Graham Shirley and Brian Adams observe:

> Each episode was unique, not only because of strong personal commitment on the part of the directors, but also as government films made by young directors confronting audiences with issues relevant to their generation.[2]

Weir based his project on a script entitled Rebellion which he had written and had tried to sell for inclusion in the current affairs television programme Four Corners (ABC). For the purpose of the film he changed his story from that of terrorism and a political kidnapping into one about a conservative young man attracted to hippie culture.[3] This partly autobiographical film was originally shot on 16mm and then blown up to 35mm for its cinema release.[4]

The film opens with a newsreel-like scene of guerilla warfare in the streets of Sydney, which later appears to be a part of Michael's dream. Then, the protagonist (Matthew Burton) meets a group of hippies whose leader, played by writer-actor Grahame Bond, attracts him and becomes his new exotic friend and a guide to unknown, forbidden realms. Michael, a young man from a middle-class family, consequently faces a choice between his "oppressive" class and a "permissive" group of radicals who embody freedom and an anti-authoritarian spirit.

The film as a whole resembles a dream, a rather naive and simplistic dream about the possibilities of counter-culture in the late sixties. Viewed in this way, Michael can be considered as a sensitive mirror reflecting the era of the Beatles and Vietnam. Weir, nonetheless, declares that these views, which include the idea of armed struggle, merely demonstrate his own "political naivete and the naivete of the times."[5]

The young rebels in Michael are confronted with middle-class representatives. After years, both groups look almost grotesque: the businessmen in a queue for the bus, all wearing the same suits and reading The Australian, are nearly as funny as the hippies' claptrap and slogans about world revolution, freedom and capitalism. I tend to agree with Brian McFarlane's opinion that in contemporary society Michael looks rather "like a simplistic examination of youthful rebellion and an equally simplistic repudiation of its values".[6]

Instead of dialogues, Weir employs rock music written and performed by the popular group, "The Cleves." Rock music, some of the lyrics, and fast editing create a 1960s atmosphere and the film's distinctive mood. The frame of mind of the protagonist is reflected through the use of popular music. In part, however, this heavy reliance upon music in Michael and the minimal use of dialogue is due to the fact that, as Weir comments, at that time the Australian accent was unfamiliar to the local audience and actors were frightened to use it.[7] The practice of the day was to employ British accents.

In Michael, for the first time, two important aspects of Weir's films appear: a distinctive archetypal protagonist and an equally unique sense of humour. As for the former, a similar protagonist, presented in slightly different versions and contexts, can be detected in all of Weir's later films. This is by no means an anti-middle-class film, although it was probably intended as such. It is nevertheless a grotesque vision of the late 1960s in which we can see Weir's peculiar sense of humour and witty remarks on Australian society. This sense of humour is also present in his later more ambitious films with the exception of the sombre Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave.

When compared with these later productions, Michael lacks mystery. Although humorous and at times engaging, Michael precedes a group of more professional works, similar in style, whose common denominator is an attempt to create a disturbing atmosphere resembling a nightmare. These films, often called "black comedies" or "Australian Gothic"[8] were: Homesdale (1971), The Cars That Ate Paris (1974) and, most absorbing and coherent, The Plumber (1978). According to Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, Weir's Homesdale marks the emergence of "Australian Gothic," a group of films consisting of, among others, works by Jim Sharman (Shirley Thompson versus the Aliens, 1973; Summer of Secrets, 1976; The Night of the Prowler, 1977) and George Miller (Mad Max, 1979; The Road Warrior, 1981). The characteristic feature of "Australian Gothic" is its perpetual reference to popular "B" culture, its eclectic visual style and the persistent use of the grotesque and perverse, its suburban setting and the absence of an immediately identifiable Australian landscape.[9]

In these films, parody and grotesque vision play an important part. However, the sense of humour is of a different kind from that of Weir's later productions. In his early films there is black humour, as in Alfred Hitchcock's works. Moreover, in Homesdale and in The Plumber, there are echoes of Hitchcock's Psycho, particularly of the famous shower scene. About these similarities Weir comments,

> I've seen reviews of my films which have seen them in terms of a black humour, but I don't think that's accurate. I suppose it depends on the way you see things. Maybe bizarre or strange, but I prefer words like enigmatic, curious or fascinating.[10]

In Homesdale, Weir's 52 minute feature, tension between the real and the unreal, between the grotesque and the "normal" is created. The plot of the film is typical for Weir: the protagonist, Mr. Malfrey (Geoff Malone), faces a number of inexplicable incidents in a private guesthouse - Homesdale Hunting Lodge - located on a secluded island. In the first scene the guests arrive by ferry. The camera captures their faces and shows their diversity. Both the Homesdale's staff and the arriving guests are grotesque. Kevin (Grahame Bond), a pop star but self-confessed butcher, and timid Mr. Malfrey, who physically and psychologically resembles Arthur Waldo from The Cars That Ate Paris, stand out from the rest. The expectant guesthouse manager (James Dellit) affords the newcomers an opportunity to release the tensions of everyday life. His staff is a collection of bizarre, grotesque figures, including a malevolent gardener, Neville, played by the now famous director, Phil Noyce. An unusual soundtrack of primitive drum music, which resembles Jill Cowper's music from

New Guinea in The Plumber, accompanies the guests entering Homesdale.

In spite of some Gothic elements (an island, an isolated locale, the demonic staff), Weir's interest does not lie in the exploration of Gothic themes and atmosphere. Instead, he tries to create a mood characteristic of black comedy. In this type of drama, humanity is driven by forces beyond understanding and control. Characters are presented as disillusioned; they act without motives and events occur without cause. All endings are only illusions. The unexpected end to Homesdale, when Mr. Malfrey becomes a member of the guesthouse staff after the murder of the singer-butcher Kevin, confirms such a supposition. The singing of "We are the boys of Homesdale" ends the film. The staff of Homesdale, including Mr. Malfrey, awaits new guests.

Homesdale can also be taken as a dark parody of psychotherapy as demonstrated by the method of portraying the manager of the guesthouse, the preparations for the "treasure hunt" and the hunt itself, and the guests' performances arranged and commented upon by the manager who promises his patient-guests complete liberation from everyday pressures: "Homesdale will help you - help you to face the truth."

The film can be construed as a kind of nightmare of Mr. Malfrey. The thematic pattern and atmosphere of Homesdale, vacillating between parody and horror, confirm that the film is Mr. Malfrey's bad dream: he experiences anxiety and horror but, simultaneously, moments of pleasure and mystery as well. As in a dream, incidents are disconnected and elements of comedy and horror are inseparably bound. Weir's later films, though more mature and more coherent, employ the same thematic pattern which began with the semi-amateurish films, Michael and Homesdale.

In his full-length feature film debut, The Cars That Ate Paris,[11] Weir presents the same hero, another isolated community, a similar black sense of humour and, what later becomes his trade-mark, the clash of people representing different cultures.

The protagonist of The Cars That Ate Paris, Arthur Waldo (Terry Camilleri), finds himself in a situation typical for most of Weir's protagonists. After a car accident near the small country town of Paris, he regains consciousness in the local hospital where he is told that his brother George has been killed in the accident. As a result of this accident Arthur is forced to stay in Paris - he suffers from driving phobia because he blames himself for his brother's death; he also remembers his first accident in which an old man was killed and in which he was at fault. Consequently, he is welcomed into the town and into the Mayor's (John Meillon) house. The viewer then sees Paris and its strange inhabitants through Arthur's eyes.

The protagonist is forced to deal with mysterious events and horrors beyond rational explanation. Seen as a whole, the film can be taken as the hero's grotesque nightmare. The Cars That Ate Paris opens with a commercial-like scene, in a style parodying a cigarette advertisement and ends showing the protagonist's escape from the wrecked town. Trapped, Arthur gradually realizes that the economy of Paris is based upon carefully planned road accidents. The cars of victims and their belongings are used as trophies and contribute to communal survival. The victims themselves are reduced to living vegetables (to a zombie-like state) in the Bellevue Ward of the hospital by the local mad Dr. Midland (Kevin Miles), who resembles his famous predecessor, Dr. Frankenstein.

Arthur also observes a confrontation between the older generation of Paris and a gang of local youths. The town is terrorized by its delinquent younger generation in bizarre vehicles constructed from the remains of demolished cars. Daryl (Chris Haywood), a hospital orderly, is leading them in their rebellion against the autocratic rules of the Mayor. In the film's final sequence, during the masquerade Pioneers' Ball, the youth's vehicles, armed with spikes and grotesquely decorated, charge through the streets of Paris. Eventually, a brutal battle with the older townspeople occurs. Arthur, who is, unfortunately, the parking inspector, has to take sides in this conflict. He chooses to support the sinister Mayor. As Arthur destroys one of the cars and fiercely kills its driver, Daryl, he awakens from inertia. He overcomes his fear of driving and, in spite of the warnings of the Mayor ("You cannot leave the town. There are no safe roads. The traps are everywhere"), drives off leaving the demolished town of Paris.

Several critics praise Weir's feature debut and emphasize that The Cars That Ate Paris, though not so ambitious as Weir's later works, is more coherent and deserves critical attention.[12] I do not, however, share this opinion. Compared with the later The Plumber, The Cars That Ate Paris lacks direction and rigour in narration as well as in style. The film's energy and its macabre sense of humour is weakened by its undisciplined and inconsistent direction.

Stylistic ambiguity permeates the film from its very beginning. The opening, appearing before the credits sequence, shows a young couple driving a sports car through the countryside. The screen is filled with images usually associated with television advertisements: a beautiful couple enjoying the outdoors, images of picturesque bush landscape, a flock of sheep, Alpine cigarettes and Coca Cola. This flow of images beautifying reality is abruptly interrupted by a car accident - the camera reveals a small country town positioned in a valley.

The commercial-like sequence is followed by a realistic one. After the credits Arthur Waldo and his brother George are shown travelling in an old camper wagon. Images from this sequence debunk the idealistic tone of the previous sequence:

two ordinary looking men in an ordinary car, three men hurriedly loading a kangaroo into the car's trunk, a visit to the local employment office.

Weir plays with a variety of themes, moods and genres ranging from parody and comedy to the western, science fiction and horror. This results in a lack of tension in the film. In spite of the accumulation of the iconography of Hollywood westerns (e.g., the confrontation between good and bad "guys" on the main street intensified by Western music; horses replaced by cars) and elements of science fiction (e.g., the mad doctor and his psychotic experiments), The Cars That Ate Paris is permeated with a sense of the macabre and fluctuates between horror and black comedy. Further, the music employed in the film is unconvincing. As a rule, music in Weir's films plays an important role in creating a dream-like atmosphere. Unlike his earlier and later works, the music in this film is without a homogeneous style and does not foster a special mood.

Owing to elements connected with the motif of romantic isolation (e.g., the idea of the town nestled in the green hills being a death-trap for outsiders), the film can be regarded as an attempt to create Gothic horror. The small town is a black hole of sorts for anyone who dares to go near. Though it is suggested that the Mayor of Paris wishes to adopt a son, the reasons why Arthur has been spared are not clear. He is the only outsider who manages to penetrate the closed community. Another stranger, the enigmatic clergyman (Max Phipps), is not privy to the town's mysteries. "One thing close families don't do. They don't talk to outsiders like Ted Mulray," the mayor warns Arthur. Later, the clergyman is murdered.

The most horrifying aspect of The Cars That Ate Paris is the people of Paris. Beneath the surface of everyday behaviour there lies horror. Unfortunately, in this film, Weir indicates rather than develops: he accumulates strange features for the sake of making the film bizarre. Most of the characters, with the exception of the protagonist and the Mayor, have fragmented appearances: the town idiot, Charlie (Bruce Spence), collecting Jaguar mascots, old women sitting in front of their houses and polishing fragments of dismantled cars, the mayor's wife, Beth, wearing a "second-hand" mink coat but only around the house, and others. In spite of this weakness, Weir's observation of seemingly ordinary people and their behaviour confirms that his main interest lies in penetrating the extraordinary or even supernatural phenomena that exist within ordinary occurrences. Hidden behind the ordinary, there are threatening and nightmarish phenomena. This idea is developed more fully in Weir's later features in which terrifying, inexplicable incidents disturb a familiar order.

Horror in The Cars That Ate Paris is neutralized by Weir's flippant comments (e.g., several remarks of the clergyman, like the one at a funeral: "Gosh, Lord, sometimes

Your ways are downright incomprehensible"), and the grotesque, gory use of violence. The film's final sequence, a careful balance between horror and comedy, is the best example of absurdist Gothic self-parody, reminiscent of Grand Guignol theatre and very much in the spirit of the anti-Hollywood tradition of independent "gore" established by Herschell Gordon Lewis (Blood Feast, 1963, and its derivatives). The surreal violence is emphasized in the portrayal of the cars: their appearance is often heralded and accompanied by animal-like noises. In Weir's film, vehicles have lives of their own: the drivers are virtually invisible, hidden behind cars' blades and spikes. In a sense, The Cars That Ate Paris heralds George Miller's dark futuristic Mad Max series.

Neil Rattigan looks at this film from a broader perspective. He believes that Paris can be a "metaphor for Australia itself - especially in its insularity, its insistence on community consensus, and its dependence upon the (feared) outside for its economic well-being."[13] While I agree, in principle, with Rattigan's perceptive comment, Weir's film can be viewed in broader terms still, as a critique of capitalist, materialist society (car as fetish, people scavenging off of other people). As indicated by its very title, the film works as a metaphor: Paris could be replaced with another town, could be placed anywhere.

Among Weir's Gothic films the most perfectly realized, and one of the most intelligent, is The Plumber, a psychological thriller which he wrote and directed for the South Australian Film Corporation and Australian television's Channel Nine. Like the earlier Homesdale, the film opens with a shower scene, another reference to Psycho. With this scene Weir not only creates a nightmarish Hitchcockian atmosphere of a "desperate struggle for sanity and survival,"[14] but also introduces an equilibrium between comedy and horror.

The Plumber examines the clash between an educated woman, Jill Cowper (Judy Morris), preparing her M.A. dissertation in cultural anthropology, and a stranger, a mysterious plumber Max (Ivar Kants). Ironically, the aspiring anthropologist, a specialist in the culture of tribes of New Guinea, is unable to understand a "primitive" young man from her own culture who violates her privacy and frightens her.

The whole situation resembles the encounter of the lawyer and the aboriginal shaman in The Last Wave but is more nightmarish and does not juxtapose two cultures (aborigines/whites) but two different people from the same culture. A key scene in the script, which, interestingly, appears in a shortened version in the finished film, is important for an understanding of this conflict. In her diary from New Guinea, from where she has recently returned, Jill describes her unusual encounter with a shaman who entered her tent and frightened her by performing his rituals. Jill's husband loudly reads the following fragment from her notes,

> On the night of 23rd April he came to my tent. He was covered in ceremonial paint, the patterns and markings of which were unknown to me. He sat on the tent floor and motioned for me to do likewise. Then began a ceremony which involved the drinking of a pungent juice which induced a kind of trance, and for several hours he shouted at me various ritual words which I did not understand. I knew instinctively I must not show fear or attempt to leave. The ceremony continued till near dawn gradually building in intensity--the man becoming physically aroused, and his actions increasingly threatening. In the tent was a bowl of goat's milk. This I seized, and lifted above my head, holding it there for just a moment. Then I hurled the content in his face. The spell was broken. Curiously, the man burst into tears.[15]

Brian (Robert Coleby), a medical researcher, advises Jill to include this fragment in her thesis. "It could become a best-seller," he says intrigued with the story but not interested in Jill's mental state. He tries to explain her fear of the stranger away by deemphasizing the danger of the situation ("He is not some sort of monster") and by accusing his wife of having "too much imagination."

The sexual threat which Jill experienced in New Guinea repeats itself. Now the object of her fear is an ambiguous working class man called Max. The viewer empathizes with Jill and her doubts as to whether the plumber is an innocent eccentric or a real threat. He verbally and physically frightens her by talking about his past, especially that he served time for rape. He takes a shower without her permission. She feels increasingly threatened by him.

Throughout the film Jill listens to music recorded in New

Guinea; it causes her to be drawn back to her encounter with the shaman. As Marsha Kinder says, it "leads us to see this earlier encounter as the 'germinal seed' that controls Jill's reactions to the plumber and to reinterpret her interaction with Max in this ethnographic context."[16]

Although she specializes in primitive cultures, Jill does not understand them and fears their rituals. She is not a researcher coolly categorizing phenomena around her. Isolated in her apartment in a huge university high-rise, she fears another "primitive" ritual performed by another "primitive" man. Jill's apartment is scattered with various tribal artifacts gathered during her research in New Guinea ("Museum in here, eh"? - remarks Max). The ambiguous plumber invades this closed world and threatens its existence. What is perceived as a threat by Jill is observed differently by others. Jill's neighbour and friend, Meg (Candy Raymond) comments that "it's a turn-on to have a spunky man working around the house." For Brian he is "quite likeable." "Don't listen to a thing," he says. "He is oversexed and overpaid," states the building superintendent's wife.

Max, the mysterious plumber, is frightening but at the same time charming and humorous, fascinating and repulsive. He is also a good observer. He notices Jill's nervousness and restlessness as well as the neglect of her husband. The ambiguous nature of the plumber begins with his first appearance and Weir maintains this ambivalence throughout the film. We do not know whether the threat of the stranger is a product of the protagonist's imagination or if it is a real menace. Like her husband, Max tells her: "You are a bit on the neurotic side. Too much imagination." These accusations from both her husband and the plumber prompt her to lose faith in herself and in her perception of reality. "I felt like I was losing control. It had never happened before," she reveals later to Brian.

The occurrence in New Guinea which she describes in her diary becomes a model for her behaviour. She is shy, passive, frightened in the face of potential danger which is not only of sexual but also of psychical nature. Pushing her endurance to the very edge, she anticipates an attack on her and suddenly turns on her "tormentor" and humiliates him: Jill reprimands the plumber for his poor English grammar thus belittling him in front of Meg. She also threatens to get him fired. Finally, she puts her new watch, a gift from Brian, and some money in Max's car and accuses him of stealing; he is sent to prison. Although innocent in this instance, Max is guilty of other offenses, including violation of her privacy, so her act seems justified in part.

On the other hand, The Plumber can be taken as a strong criticism of the sterile lives of intellectuals. The academics are interested in exotic, snobbish issues while phenomena around them are beyond their comprehension. Jill's husband is only interested in getting a position with the World Health

Organization in Geneva; Jill, in comparative isolation, is haunted by her work and her New Guinean experience. Weir stands at an ironic distance which shows their helplessness. Face-to-face with difficulties in their everyday life, when their routine is disrupted, they cannot use their highly sophisticated methods so useful in their analysis of distant primitive tribal habits. There they are able to use a certain routine procedure although this can also fail (e.g., Jill's confrontation with the shaman). When they encounter the same problems within their own culture (e.g., the plumber) they are helpless (Jill) or try to belittle the problem (Brian). Furthermore, even the people from the same social group have difficulty understanding each other (e.g., the Cowpers' family).

Although Weir often romanticizes "primitive" people, for instance, aboriginal people in The Last Wave and the Amish community in Witness, the film can be viewed both as a criticism of condescending attitudes towards lower-class behaviour and as critical of "primitive" manners. The academic world can be sterile; an inability to understand different rituals is characteristic not only of the educated classes. Viewed in this way, The Plumber might also be considered a criticism of the "primitive" behaviour of lower-classes unable to respect the "more sophisticated" rituals of other people. Ironically, the most primitive but effective solution to the problem of the clash between a well-educated woman and a "primitive" man is used by Jill herself.

The music of the film creates an atmosphere of nightmarish mystery and helps to comment upon the narrative as well as introduce new meanings. While writing her thesis, Jill listens to the sounds of primitive drums recorded in New Guinea. It reminds her of the horrifying situation with the shaman and the sexual threat she experienced there. Most importantly, thanks to the music, she remembers her final victory over the shaman-oppressor, his humiliation, and her feeling of relief. Each of Max's appearances is heralded by the rock-music on his radio, a music similar in its "primitivism" to Jill's drums, and with a similar impact on her. Jill's bathroom is transformed by the plumber into a jungle of pipes, another place where magic rituals are played by another shaman, the plumber. There he sings his own song, a mixture of Bob Dylan music and some verbal banalities. Her final triumph, as she watches from the balcony as Max is being arrested in the parking lot, is emphasized by the use of tribal chants. A freeze frame of Jill ends the film. In this way her victorious moment of domination over the intruder is prolonged.

The power of the film lies in its questioning of the rituals of both the shaman and Max as "primitive" men, and those of the middle-class represented by academics. Rituals create a self-defence system for the user. Anxiety is transferred from a situation to a ritual. A person no longer fears what really is the threat but rather an encroachment on their ritual. The Plumber portrays a situation in which people, hidden behind the iron curtain of their rituals, are unable to understand each other. There is a grotesque scene illustrating this helplessness. It occurs during a meeting with representatives of the World Health Organization during which Brian tries to impress his guests, hoping to obtain a recommendation for a prestigious scholarship. Suddenly, when one of the guests has to use the bathroom, civilized rituals are broken. Using a primitive totem, the guests try to enter the locked bathroom and to deliver the scientist imprisoned among the labyrinth of pipes. Ironically, instead of ruining the evening, this incident improves the atmosphere of the meeting and enables Brian to get an invitation to Geneva.

In discussing The Plumber, one cannot escape the inevitable comparison with the fictional world of Harold Pinter's plays and screenplays. Marsha Kinder, who with Beverle Houston co-authored an essay about the Pinter and Losey collaboration,[17] sees Weir's film as a "Pinteresque black comedy."[18] Many features justify this comparison. The Plumber is a power struggle for domination which involves sexual struggle as well as class struggle. In many respects it serves as a comment on Australian class divisions (which exist in spite of the egalitarian myth of Australia) and gender roles. As in many of Pinter's works, this film introduces a mysterious stranger-invader who raids somebody else's privacy.

The routine check-up of plumbing facilities grows absurdly out of control into a desperate struggle for survival. The ordinary is the source of threat. The action takes place in a claustrophobic space which enhances this mood of menace; the psychology of the characters is obscured making them complex and ambiguous. Everything becomes a game of manipulation and a struggle for domination.

The Plumber, however, is also very Weirian in its thematics: disruption of the familiar order, of middle-class security, an unexplained mystery/threat which is the product of everyday reality and which remains unresolved. From this perspective, the fact that the source of fear is the plumber and his work which uncovers a hidden labyrinth of pipes in the bathroom can serve as a symbol of the hidden structure within ordinary life we take for granted but which may explode into something frightening. This simple but complex film foretells in many ways Weir's Green Card (1990), another comedy of manners, this time without Hitchcockian undertones.

The four films analyzed in this chapter share a similar stylistic pattern and nightmarish atmosphere. The protagonist developed in these first films is present in Weir's later works. In the period between the release of The Cars That Ate Paris and The Plumber Weir made two very important features, Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave, which established his name as an *auteur*.

NOTES

1. Sue Mathews, 35 mm Dreams. Conversations with Five Directors about the Australian Film Revival (Melbourne: Penguin, 1984), 87.

2. Graham Shirley, Brian Adams, Australian Cinema. The First Eighty Years (Angus and Robertson and Currency, 1983), 265.

3. Ibid., 265.

4. Weir's comments in: Bill Perkins, Peter Weir's Michael," Mass Media Review, 7 (1) 1974: 12.

5. Mathews, 35 mm Dreams, 86.

6. Brian McFarlane, "The Films of Peter Weir," insert in Cinema Papers 26 (1980): 4.

7. Mathews, 35 mm Dreams, 87.

8. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, The Screening of Australia. Anatomy of a National Cinema (Sydney: Currency, 1988), 49-52.

9. Ibid., 51.

10. Brian McFarlane and Tom Ryan, "Peter Weir: Towards the Centre" (an interview with Peter Weir) Cinema Papers 34 (1981): 325.

11. The film was released in the United States in a reedited, shortened (76 minutes), and partly redubbed version as The Cars That Ate People. Arthur turns into an American tourist on an exotic trip to Australia. Weir was not involved in these changes.

12. For instance, McFarlane, "The Films of Peter Weir," 6; and David Stratton, The Last New Wave: The Australian Film Revival (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1980), 63. McFarlane believes that, "Cars is satisfying because it integrates its elements - its narrative swiftness, its sharp observation of faces and places, its awareness that apparent ordinariness barely masks violence and terror - so as to make us privy to the horror which is at the heart of Weir's vision," (7).

13. Neil Rattigan, Images of Australia: 100 Films of the New Australian Cinema (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1991), 80-81.

14. Marsha Kinder, "The Plumber," Film Quarterly 33 (4) (1980): 17.

15. Peter Weir, The Plumber: An Original Screenplay (Adelaide: South Australian Film Corporation, July 1978), 1-3.

16. Kinder, "The Plumber," 19.

17. Beverle Houston and Marsha Kinder, "The Losey-Pinter Collaboration," Film Quarterly 32 (1978): 17-30.

18. Kinder, "The Plumber," 17.

Chapter 4

CHILDREN IN THE BUSH:

Alien Orders and a New Continent in Picnic at Hanging Rock

He reminded himself that he was in Australia now:
in Australia, where anything might happen.
In England everything had been done before:
quite often by one's own ancestors, over and over again.

Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock.[1]

Picnic at Hanging Rock established Weir's name as master in creating an uncanny, dream-like atmosphere, and was among the most successful Australian films of the seventies. Opening in Adelaide, on 8 August, 1975, it gradually became a symbol of the Australian film revival. It was shown in several countries (in the United States as late as 1979, after the success of The Last Wave), to critical acclaim mirrored at the box office. Though originally ignored by the jury of the 1976 Australian Film Institute Awards, Picnic at Hanging Rock won the 1977 British Film Institute Award for Best Cinematography (Russell Boyd), and many awards in smaller international film festivals.

Picnic at Hanging Rock tells the story of a group of schoolgirls from an elite private school, Appleyard College, who, on St. Valentine's Day in 1900, take a field trip to

Hanging Rock, a sacred aboriginal ground located on the edge of the Australian bush. Two of the girls and their mathematics teacher never return. In spite of the frantic search for explanations by the police and by the locals, not enough evidence is gathered, and the Hanging Rock mystery is never resolved. Many questions are raised in the film, many tropes provided, but no explanation is given.

The script, written by Cliff Green, is based on Joan Lindsay's novel, Picnic at Hanging Rock, published for the first time in 1967, then by Penguin in 1970, and then reprinted many times following the appearance of Weir's acclaimed film.[2] Unlike the film, Lindsay's work is a sentimental, nostalgic work, a Victorian melodrama. In fact, this work resembles nineteenth century writing and is aesthetically surpassed by its filmic adaptation. Weir's acclaimed adaptation serves as a rare example of an instance where a film distinctly overshadows its literary source. Not only does the novel almost entirely owe its fame to Weir's film, but it is "read through the film," and interpreted in the same way.

Both Lindsay's novel and Weir's adaptation echo the way in which British encounters with an alien, Australian, land have been presented in various Australian forms of artistic expression. The major theme is the European (British) intrusion into an unfamiliar environment. The intruders are either rejected or defeated. Picnic at Hanging Rock shows the incompatibility of British and Australian orders. Desperate and unsuccessful attempts to preserve old orders in alien circumstances and to impose them onto the new land end in disaster.

There is a conscious attempt in the novel to convince the reader to believe that the events at Hanging Rock really happened. At the beginning Lindsay points out that, "Whether Picnic at Hanging Rock is fact or fiction, my readers must decide for themselves. As the fateful picnic took place in the year nineteen hundred, and all the characters who appear in this book are long since dead, it hardly seems important" (6). This introductory statement and other comments by Lindsay (e.g., an excerpt from a Melbourne newspaper, letters, picnickers' testimonies, police reports) try to maintain the balance between fact and fiction. Like the film, the novel, however, describes events hovering between the realistic and unrealistic, between dream and reality.

I am in agreement with Brian McFarlane that Lindsay's novel is "banal," "pretentious," "snobbish" and owes its fame to Weir's film.[3] The "snobbery" in Lindsay's narrative is seen by McFarlane not only in its sentimental narration, but primarily in the patronizing treatment of the lower classes; for instance, their vulgar manners are contrasted with the sophisticated manners of the upper, English, classes. There are many passages in Lindsay's work supporting McFarlane's assertion. Lindsay not only differentiates between the sexual conventions of the upper and the lower classes, but also presents a contrast in their behaviour. Fitzhubert's family still cultivates Victorian values and ways of dressing. Formal dresses in the bush, top hats, corsets, parasols and other accessories belong to the old order which is incompatible with the order of the new land. The lower classes are usually presented as "the children of the new land," more casual in the way they dress and behave. This way of presenting the two classes goes back to nineteenth century Australian history.[4]

Questions raised or signalled by Lindsay were taken up by Weir in his adaptation of the novel. Picnic at Hanging Rock is constructed and developed around the following sharp contrasts:

Culture (Civilization) - Nature (Earth Spirit)
Familiar - Mysterious
British (Old Land) - Australian (*Terra Incognita*)
College - Rock
Upper Classes - Lower Classes
(British-Aristocratic) - (Australian-Democratic)

Like Lindsay, Weir builds his work around the contrasts of two monoliths, the Rock and Appleyard College. The film opens with a shot of an early morning scene at Hanging Rock which towers over the surrounding landscape. From this scene a dissolve takes the viewer to Appleyard College. The awe-inspiring Rock is photographed like an old Gothic castle; as in Gothic novels or in horror films, it dominates the region and awaits its new victims. The College, and its austere Headmistress, Mrs. Appleyard (Rachel Roberts), are portrayed similarly by using a great number of low and high-angle shots stressing the authoritarian character and Victorian repressiveness of the school and its head.

While following the incidents and the characters in the novel very closely, Weir's film concentrates on the mystery, abandoning any attempts to make incidents clear. The film begins and ends with statements following Lindsay's narrative strategy, but is more concerned with the establishment of an atmosphere of mystery rather than with persuading the viewer that incidents at Hanging Rock happened in historical reality. The director traces the effects of the mystery on the people involved and the gradual decline of Mrs. Appleyard and her college without providing any explanations.

In Picnic at Hanging Rock, as well as in his other films, Weir shows the limitations of the protagonists' (and, simultaneously, our) knowledge which fails to answer basic questions. This concept is explicit in a scene showing a small plant which closes in upon itself when touched. The college gardener, Mr. Whitehead, explains to his assistant: "Some questions got answers and some haven't." There are some phenomena which are beyond comprehension; they cannot be explained. The closer we try to observe them and understand them, the more hidden and mysterious they become. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that in its narrative, characters and iconography, this film avoids analyses of social and cultural issues in favour of creating dream-like illusions and a menacing spirit of mystery. Weir's film is more an oneiric enigma than a post-Victorian attempt at dealing with the new land.

Picnic at Hanging Rock presents Weir's method of creating a dream-like atmosphere from the opening shot. The following statement opens the film and appears before the credits: "On Saturday 14 February, 1900 a party of schoolgirls from Appleyard College picnicked at Hanging Rock near Mt. Macedon in the state of Victoria. During the afternoon, several members of the party disappeared without trace..."

This written forward explains almost the whole plot. The film, however, does more than to recount incidents that happened on St. Valentine's Day, 1900, in an exclusive country boarding school: mystery and the experience of mystery are explored. Miranda's whispered voice-over line from a poem by Edgar Allan Poe, "What we see and what we seem, are but a dream. A dream within a dream," followed by Gheorghe Zamphir's pan pipe music, becomes a more exact introduction to the film. Unlike the novel, the film is dreamlike, mysterious, and filled with implications. The book presents a more ironic view of the events: Lindsay's version lacks the atmosphere achieved in the film, even though she never provides any explanation for the disappearance of the girls. Like the film, the novel ends as it began - an unsolved mystery.

The fatal picnic takes place in an environment described by, among others, one of the first Australian poets, Charles Harpur:

> Not a sound disturb the air,
> There is quiet everywhere;
> Over plains and over woods
> What a mighty stillness broods.
>
> All the birds and insects keep
> Where the coolest shadows sleep...[5]

Before leaving the school, Miranda (Anne Lambert) warns the orphan Sara (Margaret Nelson) that she must learn to love others, and mysteriously intimates that she may not return. Then, under the Rock, everyone's watches stop at noon. Miss McCraw (Vivean Gray), the mathematics instructor accompanying the girls, tries to explain this phenomenon in rational terms, suggesting that this uncanny event is caused by magnetic emanations from the Rock.

This is the beginning of the supernatural, mysterious events which occur on the Rock. The four girls, led by Miranda, remove black stockings and boots and head towards the Rock's peak. Then the girls wander through the bush, go to sleep on the Rock, only to awaken in a trance and start their exploration of Hanging Rock. The youngest of the girls, corpulent Edith (Christine Schuler), returns inexplicably terrified and, as later revealed, passes by the partially undressed teacher, Miss McCraw. Three girls and their mathematics instructor disappear without a trace. There is no explanation for the disappearance of the girls and the discovery later of the unconscious but unharmed Irma (Karen Robson) who is unable (or is unwilling) to tell the truth.

Picnic at Hanging Rock takes place at the beginning of the century, one year before the proclamation of an independent Australia (1901). Thus, it is also a film about the end of the "old world," and the disintegration of Victorian society. Both Appleyard College and Hanging Rock are shown as wonders of nature in the Australian bush. The Rock represents the new land: mysterious, untamed, wild, dangerous, yet fascinating. To use Rudolf Otto's famous terminology, it serves as a good example of *misterium tremendum et fascinosum.*[6] The college, however, is totally out of place in Australia, an incongruent remnant of the Empire. Appleyard College is an embodiment of the old world, "...an architectural anachronism in the Australian bush - a hopeless misfit in time and space," as Lindsay writes (8). In addition, the college is also "quite famed for its discipline, deportment and mastery of English literature" (13). Although for Lindsay the point of reference is perpetually Great Britain, she, like Weir, shows that Appleyard School is a violation of the laws of the new land.

The clash between the two cultures (classes) is demonstrated in Picnic at Hanging Rock by showing the relationship of Michael Fitzhubert (Dominic Guard), the young Englishman, and Albert Crundall (John Jarratt), Fitzhubert's

Australian coachman. As the girls cross the stream during their ascent to the Rock, they are observed by Michael, who has just recently arrived from England, and by Albert, who comments on Miranda's physical appearance ("She's had a decent pair of legs, all the way to her bum"). He is reprimanded by Michael ("I'd rather you didn't say crude things like that") and responds: "I say the crude things, you just think them." Later, while trying to rescue Irma, Michael collapses on the Rock from exposure. Albert not only saves him, but also finds the girl. Glen Levis makes an interesting comment regarding this scene. He believes that though the English had the courage to settle Australia, only native-born white Australians can deal with the new continent effectively.[7]

The cross-cultural, cross-class relationship between Michael and Albert, however, shows British manners and qualities as superior to those of Australians. This treatment is atypical for Australian New Wave cinema and for indigenous Australian literature in which the British were often ridiculed by the "rough but honest" native-born Australians. In speaking about archetypes of English gentlemen and native Australian bushmen turned Anzacs under Gallipoli, Geoffrey Dutton shows the persistence in Australian literature of the myth of the wise native Australian who can outperform his educated British counterpart. Dutton comments ironically, "It was a reassuring win for all honest followers of ignorance, laziness and inverted snobbery; it was also a perfectly reasonable act of revenge."[8]

Weir does not neglect the idea of culture clash, but concentrates on the creation of an "atmospheric," "hallucinatory" film. Weir's film deals with mystery and leaves a considerable number of important questions unanswered, concentrating instead on the building of oneiric imagery. The plot is given less emphasis; Weir sacrifices narrative coherence in order to produce powerful visual images. Any attempt to provide a final solution appears to be irrelevant.

Weir's film stresses a strong thematic concern with the repressed sexuality of the pubescent girls. David Myers explicitly points out that this film is a voyeuristic male fantasy in which young females are portrayed as passive objects of admiration. He declares that "Weir has escaped from a vulgar present to take us on a male voyeur's nostalgia-trip to a sexual utopia for neo-Victorian necrophiliacs."[9] In his review of Picnic at Hanging Rock Richard Combs calls the film a "sexual odyssey,"[10] and this motif is frequently found in critiques. For Brian McFarlane, for instance, this film is a "lushly poetic study of suppressed and burgeoning sexuality."[11] Weir does not reject this point of view but, for him, it is a part of a much bigger theme - nature. He states that, "The grand theme was Nature, and even the girls' sexuality was as much a part of that as the lizard crawling across the top of the rock. They were part of the same whole; part of larger questions."[12]

Nevertheless, in spite of Weir's comment, this film could be seen as a "sexual oneiric odyssey." Picnic at Hanging Rock carefully creates an atmosphere of sexual repression; its visual images and the narrative line easily accommodate such an interpretation.

The opening sequence on St. Valentine's morning at Ms. Appleyard's college shows young, innocent Victorian girls wearing virginal dresses, preparing themselves for a picnic at a place with a strange volcanic formation, Hanging Rock. Russell Boyd's camera captures their excitement and their affected behaviour. The girls lace up each other's corsets, they exchange greetings and glances, play cards, and recite poems. One of the girls imprisons a rose in a flower press. The link between the covert glances, the symbolic, preserved rose, and the pubescent girls is emphasized as they struggle into corsets in their final preparations for the trip.

The girls do not want to listen to Ms. Appleyard's warning about the dangers of the Rock. "Waiting a million years just for us," says one of the girls during the ride towards Hanging Rock. It suggests that the Rock is their destination. Because of its sexual elements (e.g., phallic peaks and vaginal caves), Hanging Rock could also be taken as an emblem of human sexuality. In broader terms, Hanging Rock represents the untamed forces of nature. It is a symbol of ancient knowledge, in this context comparable with aboriginal dreamtime (The Last Wave) and the Egyptian pyramids (Gallipoli). Mrs. Appleyard, shown in a low angle shot which enhances the feeling of dominance and oppressiveness, informs the girls that they can remove their gloves in the bush. Further, she warns them that "the rock is extremely dangerous" and the girls are forbidden any "tomboy foolishness in the matter of exploration" of an area well-known for its "venomous snakes and poisonous ants of various species."

Sexual motifs are carefully placed in the narrative. After examining Edith and Irma the physician repeats that they are "quite intact." Irma, apart from suffering from shock and exposure, has only scratches on her hands and head, but her body is mysteriously unmarked and unblemished. Mrs. Appleyard is convinced that she understands the mystery. In the end, when she talks with Mlle. Dianne de Poitiers (Helen Morse) about her dependence on Miss McCraw, she mentions the suspected rape: "I came to depend so much on Greta McCraw. So much masculine intellect. I come to rely on that woman. Trust her. How could she allow herself to be spirited away? Lost. Raped, murdered in cold blood like a silly schoolgirl." After Irma (but not her corset) is found, Mrs. Appleyard remarks that it is even worse that only one of the girls has been found.

Picnic at Hanging Rock contains a series of superimposed shots of Miranda and the white swan, similar to Leda and the swan in Greek mythology. Miranda and the swan appear in Michael's mind and his dreams: this pairing increases the sexual meanings in the film. When Michael is asked by Sergeant Bumpher about his thoughts while observing the girls at the picnic area he does not respond. His image dissolves into a close-up of Miranda and, then, into an image of a swan. The same combination of images is repeated later in the film.

Miranda, a delicate inspired person, functions as an embodiment of pubescent Victorian spirit. She does not even wear her diamond watch because she "cannot stand it ticking above [her] heart." At the rock she is absorbed by the primal bush. Miranda's image is also superimposed with the Rock and the image of a flock of birds. When she opens the gate to the picnic ground, a flock of birds rises from the ground and frightens the horses. In another memorable scene, at the picnic ground, Miranda is seen cutting a Valentine cake with a big knife. Behind her, shown in an extreme low-angle shot, is the threatening presence of her destination - the Rock.

The use of sexual motifs is best seen in the scene in which Irma, announced by the French instructor, Mlle. de Poitiers, visits the school "Temple of Gymnastics" to say goodbye to her friends. Irma is no longer the girl they once knew. After her experience at Hanging Rock she has changed from an innocent girl into a mature woman. Her appearance provokes an almost hysterical reaction from the rest of the girls. They want to know the whole truth and cry: "Tell us!"

Dressed in scarlet clothes and surrounded by her former schoolmates in white dresses, Irma remains silent.

The story also contains many ambiguous, homoerotic relationships between characters: Miranda/the persecuted Sara; Mlle. de Poitiers/Miranda; among others. In his provocative and dissenting review of the film Ian Hunter addresses the question of lesbianism in Picnic at Hanging Rock. He points out the Victoriana in Weir's film and notices that lesbianism in the film serves as "an emblem of the girls' other-worldliness" which is drawn from Victorian art, for example, from Coleridge's "Christabel" or Rossetti's the "Bower Meadow."[13]

Picnic at Hanging Rock belongs to the Australian "period/nostalgia" films which assimilated European influences by referring to European standards of cinematic taste. The "AFC (Australian Film Commission) genre," a term coined by Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka to describe Australian "period/nostalgia" films, was not prevalent in the seventies and eighties, but was the most important. It was perceived by local and international audiences as "distinctively Australian," that is, possessive of an "Australian look" which contributed in "putting Australia on the map."[14] The "Australianness" of the "AFC films" was "constructed" through landscape and history. Dermody and Jacka claim that this is a "national style" determined by the preferences of the funding bodies and hailed critically as a source of national pride. They emphasize this genre's "literariness" (mostly adaptations based on characters rather than action), its "safe nature"[15] and romantic mise-en-scene. Dermody and Jacka describe the dominant cinematic style of the "AFC genre" in the following way:

> The approach of the camera is functional rather than expressive. The closest thing to mise-en-scene are lyrical pans across picturesque landscapes or beautifully dressed interiors, giving brief, rapturous play to cinematography's recognition of what is our own. This includes not only distinctly beautiful places, but space, history and cultural traditions [...] Audiences were to be wooed, reassured, invited to a safe place where no demands would be made beyond feeling with the character, and feeling proudly at home in the setting. Similarly, editing is generally subjugated to a gently paced television-drama notion of the functional, with few passages of action.[16]

Dermody and Jacka, who are critical of this genre's superficiality in describing the local history, see this genre as the Australian contender for film art status with its "trappings" of art-film, "the sign of 'art' rather than of hard intellectual work."[17]

In many ways Picnic at Hanging Rock confirms Dermody and Jacka's assumptions. This film, as well as its literary source, draws on the long tradition of symbolism in art and religion, and on dream symbolism. Donald Barrett argues that Lindsay's novel is penetrated by themes which recall the mythology of Pan as presented in classical literature.[18] Recurrent motifs of sleep, dreams, nightmares and the atmosphere of ever-present sexual tension in the novel support this claim. Barrett's point is particularly true with regard to Weir's film, which not only evokes a dream-like atmosphere but also plays upon mythological themes.

The motif of Pan in the Australian bush was frequent at the turn of the century in Australian painting and writing. Usually, this motif was employed to emphasize the new land's energy, strength and primitive impulses. The pastoral earth-god appeared, among others, in Sydney Long's paintings ("By Tranquil Waters," 1894, "The Spirit of the Plains," 1897, and "Pan," 1898), where it served to display the uniqueness of the new continent, and in Norman Lindsay's paintings inhabited by satyrs, fauns and other mythic figures (e.g., "The Picnic God," 1907).

In her study, "Artemis in South Australia," Karelisa V. Hartigan describes those themes from the cultural representations of ancient Greece which are present in Picnic at Hanging Rock. The atmosphere at Appleyard College itself, with all its Victorian character, is totally out of place in the Australian bush country. Moreover, claims Hartigan, the relationship between the headmistress, Mrs. Appleyard, and her girls is different from that at Lesbos: rather, Mrs. Appleyard takes on a sinister resemblance to the vengeful goddess Artemis.[19] Ann Crittenden discusses it in a similar manner. Apart from looking for mythological and religious significance, her interpretation emphasizes the role of

Neoplatonism in building the pattern of events and imagery in Picnic at Hanging Rock.[20]

In 1875 William Ford painted his "Picnic Party at Hanging Rock near Macedon" which hung in the office of Lindsay's husband, Daryl, the director of the National Gallery in Victoria.[21] Before Ford, landscape painters usually stressed the vastness, the strangeness and the loneliness of the new continent. Ford was the first to see the bush as an idyllic, park-like setting in which well-dressed, prosperous families could spend their leisure time. A second influence on Lindsay was Frederick McCubbin's "The Lost Child" (1886), a painting based on the true story of Clara Crosby, a young girl who survived after being lost in the Victorian bush for three weeks in 1885. Similar influences, one can presume, shaped Weir's film.

It is useful at this point to consider various other factors that may have influenced Picnic at Hanging Rock. It should be emphasized that this film was inspired by the Heidelberg School of Australian impressionist painting (Heidelberg is a suburb of Melbourne), and by the Pre-Raphaelites. The Heidelberg School was a distinctive Australian school of painting which attempted to bring the European way of painting to Australia. This school was the first to interpret the Australian sunlit landscape in a naturalistic manner. This contrasted with earlier colonial painters who were interested mostly in stereotypical version of the Australian topography and in portraying its inhabitants. Opposition to Victorian values was frequently expressed by stressing the harsh beauty of the new landscape, and by looking for its distinctive spirit.

The portrayal of the girls in Weir's film resembles depictions from the Pre-Raphaelite paintings which reflected the Neoplatonic interpretation of nature. Sleeping beauties from Edward Burne-Jones' paintings ("The Rose Bower," "The Garden Court"), figures from the portraits by Dante Gabriel Rossetti ("The Day Dream"), Arthur Hughes ("Ophelia"), John Everett Millais ("The Blind Girl") and others, populate the impressionistic Australian landscape in Picnic at Hanging Rock.

Apart from Greek mythology, the most frequently quoted literary influences are E.M. Forster's A Passage to India and Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter.[22] Joan Kirby states that they portray the British attempt to combat and control unfamiliar lands (India, America and Australia) whose spirits and laws resist alien orders. The spirits of the American wilderness, the Australian bush and the Indian "oriental" landscape are violated by an attempt to subordinate them to an inappropriate, imported order from the Old World.

Weir, following Lindsay, employs the narrative device frequently used in Australian fiction of placing innocent, defenceless characters (mostly children) in an alien environment. John Scheckter points out that the story of the child lost in the bush is sometimes called an "indigenous Australian myth."[23] Scheckter notices that this motif appears for the first time in Henry Kingsley's The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn, published in 1859, and has since been repeated many times over and has survived almost unchanged.

Though Picnic at Hanging Rock seems to be unique in its narrative strategy, in its lack of final resolution it resembles Michelangelo Antonioni's films, particulary L'avventura (1959). Antonioni's film also deals with the mysterious disappearance of a young woman, Anna, in a "primitive," menacing rocky environment and the search for her by her lover and her best friend. Like Antonioni, Weir also does not permit the viewer to resolve the mystery. L'avventura, however, is more preoccupied with the searchers and, similarly, the searchers are more preoccupied with themselves than with the fate of the missing person.

Picnic at Hanging Rock expresses significant social patterns characteristic of Australian society. Australia, one of the most urbanized countries in the world, has predominantly rural literature. In colonial fiction, the bush was often presented as a background for novels such as those written by Ada Cambridge and Rosa Campbell Praed. Later, Henry Lawson, A. "Banjo" Paterson and other bush balladists gave graphic accounts of bush life. Lindsay's novel, although written sixty years after Lawson's, is a peculiar conglomerate of Victorian values, the ancient belief in an earth spirit and aboriginal "dreamtime" ideas. The British intrusion into a hostile land is presented in terms of a nature/culture clash.

Weir's film is also concerned with exploring Australia's physical environment. Picnic at Hanging Rock presents humankind's total helplessness when confronted with inexplicable incidents. Nature is too complex to be defined in scientific terms but, on the other hand, the aboriginal tracker, who is seen as a part of this nature, is also unable to discover anything more about the incidents on the rock. The picnic becomes a confrontation with nature, a violation of the "spirit of Australia."

The "spirit of Australia" is presented at its best through the use of the Australian landscape which is remote from European experiences. The tradition of incorporating the local landscape into Australian films has been widespread. The semantic function of the rural Australian (bush or desert) landscape has always been to delineate the difference between British and Australian. This has been perpetually part of a bigger discourse - the discourse of the Australian national identity.

The centrality of the landscape and its presentation as the site of unknowable terror for white colonisers is seen in many genres of contemporary Australian cinema: in "post-apocalypse" science fiction (e.g., the Mad Max series starting in 1979), "period" or "nostalgia" films (e.g., Burke and Wills, 1985), horror films (e.g., Long Weekend, 1978), feminist rewritings of history (e.g., Journey Among Women, 1977), children films (e.g., Storm Boy, 1976) and many others. These films are in fact about the Australian landscape: this is their obsession, their leitmotif and central character.

The international success of Picnic at Hanging Rock and contemporary Australian cinema is largely due to the fact that it employs and promotes a rural landscape of "exotic" appeal. This was also a factor which brought many foreign (mostly American and British) filmmakers to Australia before the New Wave period. Films made in 1971 by Nicolas Roeg (Walkabout) and Ted Kotcheff (Wake in Fright) looked to the harsh realities of the Australian interior landscape. Both films used the landscape as the main factor contributing to the creation of an uneasy atmosphere and, though both failed badly at the local box-office, they had a great influence on local filmmaking.

Picnic at Hanging Rock is replete with dream images. In order to create an atmosphere of mystery, Weir employs many cinematic devices such as freeze-frames, soft-focus, slow-motion photography, and voice-over narration. Furthermore, the plot is not developed in an overly complex fashion and remains unsolved and there are dream-like elements contained in the narrative. The characters have their own dreams, for example, only in a dream can Albert see the sister he has not encountered since their stay in an orphanage, while Michael has visions of Miranda. Unlike other Weir films, with the single exception of The Last Wave, Picnic at Hanging Rock is a solemn attempt at creating apprehension by employing supernatural events and mysterious occurrences. Because of their unusual, Gothic-like atmospheres, some critics classified Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave as horror films.[24] However, too many elements in these films defy this type of interpretation. As opposed to standard horror films, nightmares are not the essence in Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave; rather, unknown terrains, inexplicable events, dream and myth create a feeling of unsettling expectation.

Russell Boyd's cinematography creates hallucinatory compositions and bears a resemblance to great Impressionistic painters. Dream images are intensified mainly by employing slow motion sequences, freeze frames and soft focus shots: Miranda "flows" across the creek, the four girls are shown in slow-motion scenes as they ascend the rock, and a freeze frame of Miranda ends the film. Soft focus photography catches the whiteness of the girls' dresses and contrasts them with the color of the rock. When the terrified Edith returns, a high angle shot shows the rest of the party in a frozen, painting-like arrangement. One should mention that the film which employs many visual stereotypes (e.g., the virginal image of the girls) and trivialized cinematic devices (e.g., slow motion) is not hackneyed because such devices purposely serve to transfer the girls from a realistic dimension to a mythical one.

The enigmatic and inspired, but occasionally banal expressions used by the girls, such as Miranda's "everything begins and ends at exactly the right time and place," also create a hallucinatory, oneiric atmosphere. Hunter, in his review of the film writes: "Landscape doesn't embody time and place - but myth." For him, the mythic, only superficially (because filled with Pre-Raphaelite "nonsense") Australian landscape, is the "pictorial incarnation of that notorious Victorian malady, 'the vapors.'"[25] Preoccupied with the question of Australianness, Hunter cannot accept a work of art which lacks the Australian spirit. He cannot accept that everything in the film is geared towards atmosphere.

Weir emphasizes that the most important aspect of the film, more so than the development of characters, is the creation of a "hallucinatory, mesmeric rhythm."[26]

He achieves this result not only by extraordinary camerawork, but also thanks to an unusual soundtrack. He often uses eerie silence; the absence of sound enhances the sense of mystery and apprehension. In the first scene, in which the rock is introduced, Weir employs only natural sounds from the bush (that of insects and birds) with extensive post-production editing (e.g., magnification, speed changes, filtering), obtaining in this way a sense of the supernatural from a natural setting. Similarly, in The Last Wave, sounds of torrential rains, working wipers, flowing waters, etc., are always present. In the early scenes of both films a supernatural mood is established by using haunting visual images, specific sounds and, frequently, blocks of silence.

The atmosphere of Picnic at Hanging Rock is heightened by the mesmeric use of Gheorghe Zamphir's pan pipe music, which, perhaps coincidentally, resembles the mood of Count Dracula horror films, set in the Carpathian mountains. In this light, the use of pan pipes, as the camera scans the rock, adds new implications to the film. Pan pipe music is contrasted with the music of Beethoven's fifth piano concerto in E flat, opus 73 (the "Emperor" concerto); the visual opposition of nature/culture (rock/college) has its sound equivalent in Zamphir's "primitive" music and Beethoven's sophisticated score. A similar contrast between the European culture and a harsh Australian landscape is achieved during a garden party scene. A string quartet plays Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" while the formally dressed guests try to behave and preserve habits, in a way incompatible with the laws of the new land. The camera pans across the party guests and the well-maintained fragment of lawn only to reveal that the party place is surrounded by bush.

Color plays a meaningful role in Picnic at Hanging Rock.

The first part of the film contains mainly impressionistic images: the sun and pastel colours (yellow and green hues, white) dominate the frame. In the second part darker tones appear more frequently (mainly red and brown, e.g., the headmistress' dark dresses and her shadowy, claustrophobic room), corresponding to Mrs. Appleyard's madness and, subsequently, her death.

There are many unresolved incidents in the film and many characters filled with several layers of meaning. As in other Weir films, there are more questions than answers: questions connected with the disappearance of the girls and Miss McCraw; the Sara/Albert relationship; and Sara's persecution by Mrs. Appleyard, resulting in her suicide. These and other questions are purposely not sufficiently developed; they remain mysterious and unanswered.

In the film's final sequence a voice over commentary provides information about the future fate of Mrs. Appleyard. Her body is found at the base of Hanging Rock and it is believed that she fell while attempting to climb the Rock. The same voice informs that the search for the missing girls and their governess continued for the next few years without success and that their disappearance remains a mystery. These last words are accompanied by an extreme slow-motion of the picnic scene under the Rock. Miranda is shown waving goodbye and the freeze frame of her turning her head away from the camera ends the film. The shot fades out leaving the viewer intrigued, bewildered and under the spell of mystery.

NOTES

1. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock. First published by Cheshire, 1967. All references in this text are to the Penguin edition, 1970, 31.

2. The most intriguing, "final" chapter of the novel, was revealed when Joan Lindsay died in 1984. Her former agent, John Taylor, stated that he was in possession of the last chapter that was not to be released during Lindsay's lifetime. The final chapter appeared in the 1987 edition (on St. Valentine's Day!) as The Secret of Hanging Rock, published by Angus and Robertson. The cover of the book depicts a reproduction of McCubbin's "The Lost Child." The final chapter contains the "solution" of the mystery: the girls and Miss McCraw follow a small snake through a hole into a cave. Irma cannot follow her companions; the hole closes before her. Time stops at the rock. For more see: Donald Barrett, "Picnicking with E.M. Forster, Joan Lindsay et al.," Literature in North Queensland 15 (1) 1987: 85.

3. Brian McFarlane, Words and Images: Australian Novels into Film (Melbourne: Heinemann and Cinema Papers, 1983), 43-45.

4. See: Tom Inglis Moore, Social Patterns in Australian Literature (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of California P, 1971), 99.

5. Brian Elliott, The Landscape of Australian Poetry (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1967), 67.

6. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational (New York: Oxford UP, 1958). Quoted from the Polish edition: Swiętość (Warsaw: PiW, 1968), 43-6.

7. Glen Levis, Australian Movies and the American Dream (New York: Praeger, 1987), 87.

8. Geoffrey Dutton, "Gentlemen Vs. Lairs," Quadrant 9 (1) 1965: 14.

9. David Myers, Bleeding Battlers from Ironbark. Australian Myths in Fiction and Film: 1890s-1980s (Capricornia Institute Publications, 1987), 111.

10. Richard Combs, "Picnic at Hanging Rock," Monthly Film Bulletin 43 (511) 1976: 197.

11. Brian McFarlane, "The Films of Peter Weir," (Insert) Cinema Papers 26 (1980): 12.

12. Brian McFarlane and Tom Ryan, "Peter Weir: Towards the Centre," Cinema Papers 34 (1981): 325.

13. Ian Hunter, "Corsetway to Heaven: Looking Back to Hanging Rock," Arena 41 (1976): 11.

14. The term "genre" applied by Dermody and Jacka to these films is justified because this "genre" possesses stylistic and thematic elements which unify them. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, The Screening of Australia. Anatomy of a National Cinema (Sydney: Currency, 1988), 28-37.

15. Dermody and Jacka comment: "The AFC genre engages "history" as a way of marketing a safe product, inviting genre nostalgia for a moment seen passing harmlessly under glass." Ibid., 34.

16. Ibid., 34.

17. Ibid., 70. The "AFC genre," after its culmination in the late seventies and at the beginning of the eighties has been less prominent in the mid-eighties and later, though its continues to exist mostly in television series starting with The Anzacs (1984), Bodyline (1984), The Shiralee (1986), Vietnam (1986) Dirtwater Dynasty (1987) and several other "high-quality" television films which are popular throughout the world.

18. Donald Barrett, "The Mythology of Pan and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," Southerly 3 (1982): 299-308.

19. Karelisa V. Hartigan, "Artemis in South Australia: Classical Allusions in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," Classical and Modern Literature 11 (1) 1990: 93-98.

20. Ann Crittenden, "*Picnic at Hanging Rock*: A Myth and Its Symbols," Meanjin 35 (2) 1976: 167-174.

21. Ford's painting, "Picnic Party at Hanging Rock Near Macedon," in its way of presenting the British intrusion into an unfamiliar environment, has been both symptomatic and influential. Perhaps, it is not a coincidence that Lindsay started her work on the novel soon after the painting was acquired in 1950. See: Donald Barrett, "Picnicking with E.M. Forster, Joan Lindsay et al.," Literature in North Queensland 15 (1) 1987: 81; and Donald Barrett, "Some Correspondence with Joan Lindsay," Australian Literary Studies 14 (1) 1989: 105.

22. See: Joan Kirby, "Old Orders, New Lands: The Earth Spirit in Picnic at Hanging Rock," Australian Literary Studies 8 (3) 1978: 255-268; and Barrett, "Picnicking with E.M. Forster," 79-86.

23. John Scheckter, "The Lost Child in Australian Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies 27 (1) 1981: 62. One could contend this argument by saying that this is a universal motif, for example, innumerable versions of the Hänsel and Gretel story.

24. For example, Brian McFarlane, "Horror and Suspense," The New Australian Cinema, ed. Scott Murray (Melbourne: Nelson, 1980). In the same book Adrian Martin considers Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave "fantasy films," ibid., 97-100 and 106-109. Also Charles Derry, "More Dark Dreams: Some Notes on the Recent Horror Film," American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror, ed. Gregory A. Waller (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1987), 171-172.

25. Hunter, "Corsetway to Heaven," 11.

26. Jan Dawson, "Picnic under Capricorn," Sight and Sound 45 (2) 1976: 83.

Chapter 5

DREAMTIME AND REAL TIME IN THE LAST WAVE

We have lost our dreams. And they come back,
and we don't know what they mean.

David Burton in The Last Wave

You are in trouble. You don't know what dreams are any more.

Chris Lee in The Last Wave

As a rule, Weir's films, in particular Picnic at Hanging Rock and, later, Witness, are characterized by evocative openings. Likewise, The Last Wave (1977) opens in silence with a series of highly effective visual shots. The viewer first observes an aboriginal sand painter in the desert who is working on mysterious signs on a cave wall. In the next scene a group of aborigines prepare themselves to take shelter, though the sky is cloudless; only the voices of an imminent storm suggest the change of weather. Then the camera cuts to a small country town in the Australian outback tormented by unanticipated torrential rain. From this moment onward, these two elements, the aborigines and their mythical beliefs linked with unusual, damaging weather conditions, dominate the film.

The Last Wave, Weir's first film successfully released in the United States, shares nearly the same narrative pattern as

Picnic at Hanging Rock. As in his earlier films, Weir is not focusing on the surface of empirical observations but on psychological and anthropological dimensions.

The first part of the film serves as an example of Weir's cinematic style at its best. From the very beginning, The Last Wave consistently establishes the pervasive presence of the supernatural through a chain of climatic disruptions. A remote country town experiences an unprecedented hailstorm, "the first ever recorded fall of hail in the region," as the radio announces later. Big stones of ice fall from the cloudless sky, frightening school-children and their teacher, who remarks that they "are experiencing nature at work." Despite its opening in a remote rural area, the film is set in contemporary Sydney, where the deluge reappears, gradually increasing in intensity and in freakishness, and culminating in a downpour of frogs.

Scientific attempts to explain the strange weather conditions are unimportant in this film and are made just twice, and then only orally over the radio. The announcer quotes weather experts explaining that "the situation has been caused by an unusual widespread low pressure trough moving up from the southern polar ice." Although scientific explanations are a characteristic of the science fiction genre, the manner in which they are employed in The Last Wave does not prompt the viewer to perceive the film as a mystery to be explained in scientific terms. Instead of building the atmosphere around efforts to resolve mystery, this film, like Picnic at Hanging Rock, reveals the futility of rational explanation when confronted with mysteries caused by nature.

Taking into account this and other elements associated with the creation of horror (for instance, scenes which take place in the city's underground aboriginal caves, black figures standing in the rain outside of the protagonist's house), Weir's film shares some similarities with horror films in which questions referring to scientific (or, rather, pseudoscientific) explanations of supernatural events are irrelevant, and, furthermore, in which scientists and their quasi-inventions are the primary target of this genre's antiscientism. Nevertheless, if analyzed in terms of its plot, pattern and generic icons, The Last Wave would be more of an "anthropological thriller," "mystery" or "atmospheric" film than a typical horror film.

The Polish critic, Piotr Zawojski, discusses The Last Wave in terms of its similarity to the literary world of "magic realism," namely novels by Miguel Angel Asturias, Alejo Carpenter, Gabriel García Márquez and others. The world of The Last Wave, believes Zawojski, cannot be analyzed as belonging either to the realistic or the fantastic realm, but only as an amalgamation of both, which possesses a coherent inner structure and autonomy.[1] Similarly, for the Australian Adrian Martin, Weir's film deals exclusively with the marvellous by employing aboriginal dreamtime mythology. Any attempt at explaining strange phenomena is peripheral and redundant in this realm.[2]

From the very first scene Weir tries to blur the line between the real and the dream-like, between the Western world of logic and aboriginal tribal lore. The film's central figure, David Burton (Richard Chamberlain), a young, successful, middle-class lawyer, is asked by a colleague to defend a group of inner-city aborigines accused of killing their clan member, Billy Corman (Athol Compton), for stealing the tribal sacred stones. Corman is murdered by an old aboriginal man, whom the viewer later identifies as Charlie (played by Nandjiwarra Amagula, the spiritual leader of the aboriginal Groote Eylandt community), by pointing a "death bone" at him. This initial idea enables Weir to contrast two different worlds, the aborigines' with their dreamtime and the white Australians' with their rationalized dreams. As was the case in his earlier films, Weir constructs The Last Wave around a number of sharp oppositions:

Whites - Aborigines
Real Time - Dreamtime
"Civilized" Law - Tribal Law
Rational - Irrational
Legality - Magic

The film develops the theme of two cultures - different, yet forced to coexist - by constantly juxtaposing the underground world of the aborigines, which is invisible for the whites and symbolically located beneath the city sewers, and the life of white Australians. The pristine, underground world of aborigines houses their mysterious artifacts. Given this explicit division between the official, white, and the hidden, aboriginal, it is possible to claim that the aborigines in The Last Wave are portrayed as a culture which is not only hidden (that is, not taken seriously) but also serves as a reminder of the complex, unsolved racial problems in contemporary Australia.

In speaking of his intentions during the making of the film, Weir comments: "I wanted in the film to show the contrast between the European without the dreaming and the tribal person with the dreaming."[3] Weir's film emphasizes an exceptional case of cultural clash, namely a white lawyer's confrontation with the representatives of the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia. David's wife, Annie (Olivia Hamnett), even explains that she is fourth generation Australian and has never met an aborigine before. Consequently, she is scared of the aborigines seeking her husband's legal aid, especially of the enigmatic Charlie who appears in front of her house.

The choice of the profession of lawyer, with its connotations of logic and rational thinking, is not accidental in the context of the film. Contrasting the "civilized" law and the aboriginal law enables Weir to show the immense cultural gap between the two cultures. Tribal law, which is "more important than man," as Chris Lee (David Gulpilil) explains to the protagonist, and rational "civilized" law have no common ground. The trial of the aborigines accused of killing, presents, however, not only the weakness of the white Anglo-Saxon lawyers, unable to cross the spiritual barrier separating them from tribal law, but also the sterility of the dreamtime culture. In the court room scene, in particular, the camera captures the incompatibility of both cultures/laws by juxtaposing close-ups of barristers' white wigs and the black faces of the aborigines. The scene in which oaths are taken on the Bible, an act which obviously holds no value for the natives, also shows the deep gulf between the rational and the tribal/supernatural.

The aboriginal dreamtime is beyond the protagonist's comprehension. Although he gradually develops a certain affinity with the aboriginal world of dream, David slowly becomes convinced that he is a "mulkrul," according to aboriginal beliefs, the descendant of an ancient South American race who inhabited Australia in prehistoric times (David himself was born in South America). In a too-explicit scene, when asked by the aboriginal elder, Charlie, about his origins, David confirms his role as a "mulkrul," as a mediator between races who is able to foresee the apocalypse, a person who has "incredible premonitory dreams," and as an individual belonging to "a race of spirits from the rising sun," as the anthropologist in the film (Vivean Gray) explains to David. From the anthropologist's lengthy comments the viewer also learns that, according to aboriginal convictions, life is divided in cycles, and "each cycle ends in a kind of apocalypse, usually natural disaster." The reappearance of "mulkruls," supposedly, announces the end of a cycle and the end of the world.

Since childhood, David Burton has been haunted by nightmares and hallucinations about people who come and steal one's body during sleep. As his stepfather, a clergyman, reminds him, David was also able to predict the death of his mother. In his nightmarish dreams he sees an aborigine showing him a mysteriously painted stone and a medicine man sometimes disguised as an owl. David is also troubled by a premonition of a giant apocalyptic flood. When he recognizes one of the aborigines, Chris, as a figure from his dreams, his free floating anxiety begins to grow. The distressed protagonist sends his family to the country and, with the help of Chris, discovers aboriginal paintings in the sewers below Sydney, which depict an apocalyptic tidal wave. He also uncovers a death mask bearing a strong resemblance to him. It reinforces his convictions that he is, in fact, a man of two worlds, a "mulkrul." Through a sewer pipe he gets to the empty Bondi beach and waits there for the inevitable disaster. Finally, he has a vision (or is it real?) of a giant wave, signalled by the film's title.

David's dreams foreshadow later events ("What you dreamed, happened," explains his father) and put him in contact with the aboriginal dreamtime. The Last Wave is consistent in building up tension, as well as in depicting the alienation of the protagonist and his emotional entrapment. Weir consciously gives up many traditional cinematic techniques so characteristic of horror and science fiction films. For example, he avoids scenes threatening to the audience or the utilization of sharp turns, shocking imagery, sound effects, etc. to dynamize the action. Rather, he employs a Hitchcockian sense of pacing. This is evident in his portrayal of the lawyer: David's loss of control over his immediate surroundings is gradual. Like most of Weir's protagonists, the lawyer finds himself in a situation beyond his comprehension and control. Caught between two worlds, the worlds of dream and reality, he is incapable of distinguishing between these two realms. The last sequence, in spite of its explicitness, merely multiplies unanswered questions concerning this dream/reality bond.

On a macro level, The Last Wave is a film about a clash of cultures, about the relationship between dream and reality; on a micro level, it is a psychological journey into the self, ending in a state approaching schizophrenia. David grows increasingly obsessed with his role as mediator between two cultures. This is a task beyond his capabilities. His emotional distress and, what follows, his disintegration, is a natural consequence of the whole situation. From this perspective, the film in its entirety can be taken as the protagonist's schizophrenic vision: the viewer follows his gradual loss of sense of time, his isolation from the external world and his eventual fall into madness.

The motif of water, already introduced in the first sequence, permeates the film and contributes immensely to its mood. Russell Boyd's camera catches aboriginal figures emerging from the torrential rains, shots of the city through David's windshield - Sydney's streets filled with water, David's nightmarish watery hallucination, freaks of nature. Falling water is used to integrate various subplots into a coherent whole: the sprinkler whispers on David's lawn while he discusses his dreams with his stepfather; water drips as Billy Corman's body is examined in the mortuary. Weir even makes fun of his method of building the film's atmosphere and, at the same time, of the audience's expectations, by showing a family dinner disrupted by water flowing down the staircase, presumably the result of a child's overflowing bath.

The visual motif of water receives its fullest development in the lawyer's apocalyptic visions. Through his car window he sees the streets of Sydney under water: dead bodies and tomatoes flow by in a dreamy, surrealistic scene. Employing slow motion and using blocks of silence interrupted only by the whir of windshield wipers, Weir achieves a remarkably hallucinatory and nightmarish effect.

Perhaps coincidentally, water imagery also plays a significant role in The Plumber (water is his profession), Gallipoli (soldiers swimming underwater), The Year of Living Dangerously (a pool scene) and The Mosquito Coast (rivers, coastlines, seas). In The Last Wave, however, the motif of water is used as the major element, the overriding motif connecting plot elements and the building of atmosphere. In comparison with the soft, sunny, lyrical colors of Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Last Wave is cold, dark, bathed in rain; the colors (mostly blacks, browns and greens) stress the protagonist's sense of menace and isolation.

A comparison of the narrative lines and cinematic devices employed in Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave reveals, however, that the latter, in spite of its visual beauty, is too verbal and too literal. The Last Wave suffers from excessive explicitness. Its cinematic sophistication does not balance its narrative shallowness. Weir too often employs verbal comments to explain the plot and, as a result, he cannot abstain from naming things. This policy rigidifies the film, closing both the narrative line and the ideas contained within it. The Last Wave lacks tension in some crucial scenes in which Weir relies heavily on the verbal commentary of the protagonists, instead of building tension and atmosphere by using strong visual images, as is characteristic of his other works. In comparison with the enigmatic lines from Picnic at Hanging Rock, some dialogues in The Last Wave weaken the atmosphere of mystery. The protagonists talk about dreams, laws and mysteries. The weakness of the screenplay (written by Weir himself with Tony Morphett and Petru Popescu) prevents Weir from reaching his full potential. On the one hand, the film is superficial in its exploration of the plight of aborigines in urban society and, hence, fails to function as an accurate reflection of social pressures. On the other hand, it is too literal to maintain tension, part and parcel of a "mystery film." To be sure, Weir places emphasis on the unimportance of endings in his films,[4] but the final sequence, as David awaits the wave on the beach, is too obvious and therefore an unconvincing conclusion. The ending breaks the rules established at the beginning of the film and makes visible what should be invisible and hidden within the film.

Weir's film as a whole may be taken as a visualization of the protagonist's nightmarish dream. In The Last Wave, it is only possible to comprehend mystery while dreaming, and only within the realm of dreams. This is also strongly emphasized in Picnic at Hanging Rock: the girls go to sleep on the rock, awaken, continue their exploration and never return; Michael sleeps on the rock and then is able to find lost Irma; Albert's sister, unknown to him, appears in his dreams. The Last Wave also looks like the protagonist's dream: while preparing for the complex legal procedure, he has a dream about his alleged affinity with the incomprehensible, in terms of traditional rational thought, aboriginal culture. The Last Wave thus serves as a clear example of what might be perceived as a realization in cinematic form of the theories of Carl Gustav Jung.[5]

For Jung, dreams emerge not only from the dreamer's buried psychic life but are connected with archetypal elements common to all cultures. In his dream analysis, Jung asserts that there is material in dreams which could never originate in personal experience, but which must be derived from archaic levels of the mind, the source of which can be found in humanity's primitive ancestry and in the experience of the race. Furthermore, he believes that within each person there is a "collective unconscious" which appears in "primordial images." The forms in which these "primordial images" manifest themselves in conscious life, Jung denominates as archetypal images: their potentialities he labels archetypes.

The concept of dreams as unifying all cultures and races and the concept of archetypes common to all human beings pervades Weir's film. In interviews Weir often stresses the importance of Jung's writings together with works by Thor Heyerdahl and Emmanuel Velikovsky.[6] Weir comments that Jung's archetypal images, "came together for [him] around the time [he] was finishing the script of The Last Wave, and a lot of that material, [he] found, could be looked at from a Jungian perspective."[7] A faithful reader of Jung, Weir makes his protagonist a dreamer, able not only to foresee accurately future events, but also, thanks to dreams, to feel spiritual nearness with a different culture.

In addition to archetypal images and dreams, the similarity between dream and film has influenced many artists, including Weir. Since the beginning of cinema, both filmmakers and audiences have addressed this parallel. The dream-like quality of cinematic depiction typically results in films being perceived by critics as visualizations of dreams. Weir's film, however, does not appear to be his or the audience's dreams, but is structured like a dream. The director does not translate the language of dreams into cinematic images; his interest lies in creating an oneiric mood. Both the narrative and the visual levels of The Last Wave diminish the distinction between real and dream-like worlds. The viewers' identification with this dream-like atmosphere and consequent associations with their own dreams, intensifies the impact of the film.

Weir's preoccupation with dream, however, makes him neglect social commentary on the situation of the native inhabitants of Australia. The Last Wave, written in part by aborigines,[8] and featuring their participation as actors, merely touches upon the "aboriginal problem." Compared, for instance, to Phillip Noyce's Backroads (1977), Fred Schepisi's The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (1978) or Ned Lander's Wrong Side of the Road (1981) which present aborigines as victims of the system, Weir romanticizes aborigines, and ignores social issues. The Last Wave, however, cannot be described as not paying any attention to the predicament of aboriginal people of Australia or as using them as exotic figures in the manner of, for instance, Tim Burstall's Eliza Frazer (1976) or, later, Igor Auzin's We of the Never Never (1982).

Weir is more an anthropologist than a researcher interested in social issues. For him, the clash of two different cultures is simply an opportunity to explore the sterility of both cultures, and their inability to understand each other. As a rule, Weir romanticizes "primitive" people; such a treatment in The Last Wave hinders the film from speaking more seriously about the plight of aborigines in contemporary Australia. In spite of the native actors and their important contribution, the film falls into a romantic conclusion about the superiority of aboriginal "primitive" culture over the white rationalized culture devoid of dreams. (Ironically, the protagonist of this film is accused by his friends from Legal Aid of having fallen prey to "idiotic romantic crap" and "middle-class paternalism" towards the aborigines; moreover, he is persuaded that "there are no tribal people in the city" and, consequently, that the killing of Billy Corman has no tribal significance and cannot be given to tribal authorities.)

The Last Wave draws upon the same conventional images of aboriginal people which can be found in some of the New Wave Australian films. The aborigines in contemporary Australian cinema are primarily presented as exotic figures of mysterious power lost in a white man's world, people with a special understanding of secrets of nature, a tribal culture which relies heavily on its dreamtime mythology. The presence of aboriginal people in Australian films, mostly as a protagonist's side-kick guiding him through the impenetrable interior landscape, is used to enhance the sense of "Australianness."

Contrary to the viewer's expectations, however, Weir's film belongs to what is in fact a comparatively small group of Australian feature films dealing with the native inhabitants of Australia. In discussing Australian films made before 1977 (before The Last Wave), Andrew Pike explains the peculiar situation in local cinema in which, "minorities of most types, whether racial, social or political, have rarely received more than peripheral attention from the commercial mainstream of Australian cinema, which has always been the domain of the white urban middle class."[9]

Since the inception of the local film industry, the aborigines have been presented in many films, but until the appearance of Charles Chauvel's Jedda (1955), they were only marginal, exotic figures populating equally exotic outback landscapes. The aborigines appeared frequently in the bushranging genre, mostly as faithful helper-friends to the heroic/romantic figure of the bushranger. In many respects, the treatment of aboriginal people in Australian films is analogous to the portrayal of American Indians and blacks in Hollywood films. As in American genres, aborigines were often played by white actors made up with black faces.[10] However, there is one feature that differentiates them from the natives of America and blacks: there always was and still is sympathy (perhaps a sense of guilt?) towards them as outsiders. They function as colorful, yet passive figures not able to threaten white Australians. Their role was limited to two major characteristics. First, they were cast as voiceless savages, and their appearances, as Catriona Moore and Stephen Muecke state, "were indistinguishable from those of blacks in Tarzan-type movies."[11] Second, the aborigines were and still are, nearly synonymous with the Australian landscape, or rather, constitute a "natural" component of that landscape. They are frequently non-persons: de-humanized, mythic-like figures stereotypically portrayed against a sunset or resting under a gum tree. In discussing this issue, Graeme Turner points out,

> Aborigines have been, and continue to be seen as metonyms for an Australian landscape; like kangaroos and Ayers Rock, they are among the natural attributes of the continent. This is dehumanizing, and has served to legitimate white settlers' treatment of the aborigines as pests well into the twentieth century. It is also a way of displacing the social and political problems. To see the aboriginal as a dying species rather than a subordinated culture is to explain their condition as a result of the inevitable operation of natural forces rather than as the product of a specific history.[12]

Turner's point here is of great importance. An inability to come to terms with the "aboriginal issue" creates a peculiar situation where, no matter how noble and "progressive" intentions are, filmmakers tend to employ the aborigine figure only as an emblem of "natural," almost biological forces and as an archetype deprived of individuality. Contrary to personified white protagonists, aborigines symbolize the land and its pre-history. A sense of guilt towards aborigines is behind many attempts at rewriting Australian history from a "more objective" perspective. Frequently, however, the result is a disappointing image of a powerful aboriginal culture, richer in many aspects than the Western culture, the image being a product of romantic representation and guilt-ridden sentimentality, rather than a reflection of history and present-day reality. The majority of the attempts made by filmmakers at depicting the aboriginal culture can still be described as an act of "intellectual tourism," a term coined by Turner to describe the attempts by white academics to go beyond their own ideological framework while deconstructing white Australia's construction of aboriginal culture.[13]

A similar problem arises in Australian fiction dealing with the "aboriginal issue." The aborigines were first introduced as a problem for the white settlers.[14] From the colonizers' point of view, they were usually presented as either threat-posing stone-age nomads, or noble savages lost in the whites' world. The evolution of the portrayal of aborigines can be described as a shift from presenting them as aggressors and as a threat to capitalist progress to victims of social injustice imposed by white colonization. An analogous change is also noticeable in contemporary Australian cinema to the point where aborigines are presented as either tragic, humiliated figures taking desperate revenge for injustice done to them (The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith), or dignified figures shown in a sentimental-romantic fashion (The Last Wave).

In discussing the way in which aboriginal people are presented on the screen, Moore and Muecke distinguish three "discursive formations," linked with Australian cultural policy, which characterize Australian films containing images of aborigines.[15] The "paternalistic assimilationist" formation characterizes films made in the fifties and sixties, and is followed by a "liberal multiculturalist" formation, present up to now, which portrays the aboriginal culture as one of many national cultures in Australia contributing to the "mosaic" of Australian culture. The third formation, parallel to the "multiculturalist" one, deals with independent films made by aboriginal filmmakers with their own perspective. If we accept the above mentioned periodization, The Last Wave, with its idealist concept of dreaming, defies categorization. Moore and Muecke, however, see this and other "aboriginal films" made in the 1970s as a result of "liberalizing the frontier."[16]

The Last Wave, as well as its predecessor, Picnic at Hanging Rock, are films with a rare sense of mystery in which their strength lies. On the surface, both films contain a loose narrative line, but in fact, both have a coherent inner logic.

The Last Wave and Picnic at Hanging Rock deal with dream and the possibility of crossing the border between the rational and the spiritual; their protagonists act within the borderland of these two worlds and unsuccessfully try to mediate between the two. The two films, working with similar material, achieve different results. Mysterious from the beginning to the end, Picnic at Hanging Rock relies on its strong impressionistic visual images and haunting music and is nearly a pure "atmospheric film." The Last Wave appears to point to Weir's disbelief in the audience's ability to comprehend; it is too explicit and less dream-like. Nonetheless, its importance lies in creating a dream-like atmosphere purely via cinematic techniques. The first part of the film in particular, which owes a great deal to special effects (by Monty Fieguth and Robert Hilditch) and Boyd's photography, serves as a good example of Weir's ability to create an unsettling mood. Unfortunately, the film loses its impetus and the weakness of the screenplay surfaces. An enigma which offers an explanation is no longer an enigma.

NOTES

1. Piotr Zawojski, "Świat jako projekcja świadomości: *Ostatnia fala*," Szwenk 3 (1985): 11-22.

2. Adrian Martin, "Fantasy," The New Australian Cinema (Melbourne: Nelson and Cinema Papers, 1980), 106.

3. Sue Mathews, 35 mm Dreams: Conversations with Five Directors about the Australian Film Revival (Melbourne: Penguin, 1984), 97.

4. Weir claims that his interest lies "in those unknown areas not so much in finding neat endings. There are no answers, there is no ending." David Stratton, The Last New Wave: The Australian Film Revival (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1980), 77.

5. For example, C.G. Jung, Psychological Reflections: A New Anthology of His Writings 1905-1961, ed. Jolande Jacobi (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973).

6. For example, Sue Mathews, 35 mm Dreams, 113; Brian McFarlane and Tom Ryan, "Peter Weir: Towards the Centre," Cinema Papers 34 (1981): 325.

7. Terry Dowling and George Mannix, "Peter Weir: Master of Unease," Science Fiction: A Review of Speculative Literature 3 (1) (1980): 14.

8. Weir stresses the importance of David Gulpilil's and Nandjiwarra Amagula's contribution to the final version of the film. Sue Mathews, 35 mm Dreams, 96-98.

9. Andrew Pike, "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films," Meanjin 4 (1977): 592-599.

10. Surprisingly, the same practice was employed in Journey Out of Darkness (1967, dir: James Trainor), a film about a white policeman escorting an aborigine accused of murder to trial. The role of the aboriginal tracker is played by a white actor, Ed Devereaux, the role of the killer by a Sri Lankan born singer, Kamahl. Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years (Sydney: Currency, 1990), 228-229.

11. Catriona Moore and Stephen Muecke, "Racism and the Representation of Aborigines in Film," The Australian Journal of Cultural Studies 2 (1) (1984): 39.

12. Graeme Turner, "Breaking the Frame: The Representation of Aborigines in Australian Film," Aboriginal Culture Today ed. Anna Rutherford (Dangaroo Press-Kunapipi, 1988), 140.

13. Ibid., 135.

14. See Helen Daniel's illuminating discussion, "The Aborigine in Australian Fiction: Stereotype to Archetype?" Modern Fiction Studies 27 (1) 1981: 45-60.

15. Moore and Muecke, "Racism," 36.

16. Ibid., 42-3.

Chapter 6

IN QUEST OF SELF-IDENTITY: "Gallipoli," Mateship and the Construction of Australian National Identity.*

If there had not been a Gallipoli,
Australians would have invented it.

Livio and Pat Dobrez[1]

Gallipoli (1981) was my "graduation film," stated Peter Weir treating this work as the end product of the period when he was particularly interested in myths and dreams.[2] Gallipoli, one of the masterpieces of Australian cinema, is also his most Australian oriented film, as he searched for the roots of national identity in the World War I battle of Gallipoli, marginal for the war as a whole, but of great significance for Australians and their national identity.

What does this "graduation" mean? Although Weir does not provide any specific explanation, he does suggest a turn towards professionalism and filmic maturity. It also announces a move from low budget films made in his own country, towards high budget films made in the United States that reflect a style common to American film production. Furthermore, "graduation" and Gallipoli indicate a turn towards simplicity and clarity, towards specific genres, a shift from the mysterious oneiric landscape of Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave. With George Miller's Mad Max (1979), Gallipoli was also one of the first Australian films to receive mainstream American distribution (by Paramount).

---

* A different version of this chapter was published in Journal of Popular Film and Television 21 (1) 1993: 27-36.

In his 1986 interview for Film Comment, Weir once again emphasizes the importance of Gallipoli in his artistic development. For him, it is a breakthrough film which came after one year of studying European and American cinema. Gallipoli is also his "least personal film" and his favourite one. "It was the first time," he claims, "I think I had real confidence in what I was doing, some understanding of craft, while still being an apprentice."[3]

As opposed to Weir's earlier films, Gallipoli is based on authentic historical events, the participation of Anzac (Australian and New Zealand) troops in the 1915 Dardanelles campaign. "The wireless tells and the cable tells, how our boys behaved by the Dardanelles," Henry Lawson begins his famous Song of the Dardanelles.[4] Nevertheless, the film is not simply an attempt to reconstruct those events but deals with Weir's favourite theme - that of individuals facing strange events in a hostile environment. This metaphysical cast of theme gives way to a psycho-sociological approach that is reflected in Weir's choice of thematic opposition. The cosmic oppositions from Weir's earlier films, dream versus reality (The Last Wave); nature versus culture (Picnic at Hanging Rock), are replaced by a more concrete dichotomy in Gallipoli: Australia versus Britain.

The purpose of this endeavour is to define the notion of "the Australian nation" by going back to, and examining, such local stereotypes and mythology as good Australians/bad foreigners, the myth of innocent Australia, the attributes of Australianness versus Britishness. Employing visual stereotypes, Weir does not want to deconstruct but rather to reinforce the mythic elements constituting the Australian national identity. Such a cinematic purpose was strongly supported by one of the leading advocates for the creation of national cinema, Phillip Adams: "We got into this industry for one reason: to give ourselves a national voice, to give ourselves a sense of national purpose and a national identity, and to throw it that way would be a disaster and a fiasco."[5]

Of course, Weir's film is not the first artifact to play upon the modern Australian self-image. Gallipoli is deeply rooted in the local mythology of Australia as well as in the national literary and painting tradition. And as such, Weir's film may be seen both to derive from, and continue on in the discussions on national identity as well as nationalist feeling, which emerged distinctively for the first time by the end of the nineteenth century. The changing attitude toward the Australian landscape, the romanticization of the bush and the bushman, and the emergence of local artists, painters, poets, and writers interested in defining their new environment, contributed to the nation-making process. Finally, the Boer War with Australia's participation, but under British command, was a kind of "emotional substitute for a real war of independence."[6] The war correspondent and poet A.A.G. "Smiler" Hales put it bluntly:

> A nation is never a nation
> Worthy of pride or place
> Till the mothers have sent their first born
> To look death in the field in the face.[7]

The title of Weir's film refers to the 1915 Gallipoli campaign during the First World War. Australian and New Zealand troops landed on the Aegean side of the Gallipoli peninsula near the end of April 1915, and fought there through December 1915, when the troops were evacuated. The film's climax is the suicidal, senseless attack on well-fortified Turkish trenches undertaken by the eighth and tenth Light Horse Regiments of Anzacs.

The Gallipoli battle has an important place in Australian history and mythology, and lives on in film, literature and historical works. It was an event of national significance. Bill Gammage, historian and advisor on the film, notes that before Gallipoli, in November 1914, the Australian cruiser "Sydney" had driven aground the German light cruiser "Emden." This victory was celebrated as conferring adulthood on the Australian navy. To build a nation, however, a more spectacular event was needed. "The time was awaiting the event," concludes Gammage.[8]

Despite its title, Gallipoli is not a "war film" or an "anti-war" film, but a "celebration of the national ideology," as Jane Freebury has observed in her symptomatically subtitled article: Screening Australia. Gallipoli: A Study of Nationalism on Film.[9] The film places emphasis on parallels between personal and national history. The protagonists, Archy Hamilton (Mark Lee) and Frank Dunne (Mel Gibson), resemble Australia itself - young, inexperienced, enthusiastic. In the first part of Gallipoli, Archy's trainer, Uncle Jack (Bill Kerr), reads to his family passages from Kipling's Jungle Book, where Mowgli becomes a man. Later, for Archy and Frank, the Gallipoli battle marks their passage into manhood, and for Australia, the baptism of fire and, consequently, the birth of a nation. Albinoni's funereal Adagio for Strings and Organ serves to emphasize this painful moment.

Weir's film contrasts the essence of Australianness (mateship, the outback, isolation, innocence) with the corruption, depravation, and crowdedness of the rest of the world. Australia's isolation from the world's issues and hence its innocence is strongly stressed, particularly in the first part of the film which takes place in Western Australia's outback. The key-scene of Archy and Frank's meeting with an old man with a camel in the desert emphasizes this distinctly. The old man, Stumpy (Harold Baigent), does not know about the war and has never been to Perth. When Archy explains why Australians are involved in the war, the old man cannot understand. Weir's (and scriptwriter David Williamson's) sense of humour puts it this way: "Still, can't see what it's got to do with us (doubts Stumpy)...If we don't stop them they could end up here (persuades Archy)... And they are welcome to it (answers Stumpy looking around at the vast desolate countryside)." The sense of Australia's isolation is given by emphasizing the emptiness and immensity of the landscape.

In combining themes of isolation and images of landscape, Weir accentuates an aspect central to the Australian mythology of self-identity. As a rule, the Australian landscape is one of the most important elements of the New Wave period films. Picnic at Hanging Rock, Sunday Too Far Away, The Mango Tree (1977), The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, The Irishman (1978), My Brilliant Career (1979), and many others employ the landscape to generate the essence of Australia. The Australian landscape in these films is the source of meaning--a distinctive characteristic that has its own discursive function. It typifies the "real Australia" and establishes the difference between Australian and European culture.

There was always a visible duality for Australian artists representing the Australian landscape. One group of artists, particularly with a European background, perceived the land as hostile, dangerous, constituted of an alien nature. Another group of artists tried to capture the uniqueness of the land

and to describe its physical environment, promoting and even idealizing the land. Exploring their physical environment, they attempted to overcome the "colonial inferiority complex." The change from a colonial to a national art was linked primarily with a different perception of the landscape: from alien and hostile to human and mythic, with marked preference for the local, Australian, over the English-imperial.

The Heidelberg School of impressionist painting, a distinctive Australian school of painting between 1885 and 1890, established popular images of the rural landscape. Earlier, colonial painters emphasized the strangeness of the new continent. As early as 1875, however, William Ford saw the bush as a pleasant setting resembling an English park. His painting, Picnic at Hanging Rock near Macedon, depicts Victorian families resting in an Eden-like Australian bush. Representatives of the Heidelberg School (Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Charles Conder, and others) not only depicted effects of light and color, but introduced and interpreted the Australian sunlit landscape. McCubbin's "The Lost Child" (1886) can be seen as a metaphor of Europeans in Australia. It shows a child standing in a bush, dressed in blue-green colors and visually camouflaged among gum trees. This motif often appeared in Australian paintings and prints, for instance, in the popular prints of Samuel Thomas Gill (The Australian Sketchbook, 1865). Later painters, most notably Sydney Nolan, Russell Drysdale, and Arthur Boyd, stressed the uniqueness of the landscape and its metaphysical and mythic content. The landscape thus became mythologized and perceived as distinctively Australian.

Australian writers were also concerned with explaining and promoting their environment. Like the painters, they supported nostalgia for the rural lifestyle while describing Australia's non-European landscape. In particular, the bush and the bushman stood for the "real Australia." The change from a colonial to a national literature was connected with a specific shift of emphasis: from nostalgia for Europe and a related representation of the outback simply as an exotic background for novels of European experience (e.g., in the writings of Ada Cambridge or Rosa Campbell Praed), to national awareness, and to the situation where bush is seen as distinctively Australian and hence idealized in the works of Henry Lawson, Andrew Barton "Banjo" Paterson, Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, Bernard O'Dowd, and others.

Given this history of a consciously articulated attempt to emphasize the specificity of Australian geography and experience in cultural expression, it is perhaps inevitable that these expressions should take on a mythic dimension to become, like the Australian landscape itself, larger than life. "Australia is a small country with long journeys," states George Seddon.[10] Russell Boyd's photography in Gallipoli stresses the emptiness of the landscape. The monochromatic sandy colors of three deserts (Australian, Egyptian, and Gallipoli), and the khaki color of the soldiers' uniforms, contrasted with a blue sky, dominate the film. The oneiric images of boys crossing the Australian desert, night scenes under the Pyramids, landing at Gallipoli, and the underwater scene there, and many other images enhance the atmosphere of Weir's film. They create more myth than historic reality.

Similar to Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave, the protagonists of Gallipoli move toward something unknown, toward an undefined force. When they reach the finale, one of them, the innocent virginal Archy, loses his life. Although Gallipoli is not a "mystery film," its mythic content, enhanced by carefully used cinematic devices, produces a dream-like effect. All historical inaccuracies of the film are entirely subordinated to newly arisen mythology.

The landscape in the first part of Gallipoli, many times reproduced in earlier Australian films, helps to achieve visually what is strongly emphasized in the desert scene. In this particular scene, crucial for the film's presentation of Australia's isolation in 1915, Weir employs the immensity of the landscape and juxtaposes it against the boys' youthfulness, enthusiasm and desire to see the world. If in Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave, the director plays on nature-culture oppositions, in Gallipoli, he stresses the unity of man and the landscape that is only seemingly hostile to man. Weir seems to employ the landscape in the way in which

John Ford creates an archetypal landscape of the American West. For both Weir and Ford, the landscape is the source of meaning. Although at first glance human figures seem to be alienated from this realm, ultimately they are neither powerless nor insignificant. On the contrary, human beings people the tamed landscape, which is a key factor in the establishing of a mythology of both the American West and the Australian outback.

Weir chooses the outback as a starting point for his film, one which is similar to the most successful Australian films of the past decade. Although Australia is among the most urbanized countries (most Australians lived and still live only in a few large coastal cities), one of Weir's protagonists (Archy) comes from the countryside (bush), which symbolizes the "true Australia" based on a male-dominated society. The Australian rural worker (the bushman) embodies all Australians. The rural virtues are contrasted with the decadence and moral corruption of the city. Frank, the working-class Irish boy from the city (larrikin/ocker), has become corrupted by the city. He can be saved only by his relationship with a noble bushman. This pattern, which was employed later by the director in his Witness (1985), is present in the Australian cinema from its beginnings. In his Legends on the Screen, John Tulloch shows that the thematic concern of Australian cinema in the 1920s was to establish the contrast between the city and the bush. He goes on to suggest that this opposition replaced the class antagonism of Australian society.[11] Interestingly, this same opposition is the source of international success in such films as Paul Hogan's Crocodile Dundee (1986), which play upon the distinction between the rural-Australian and urban-American.

Russel Ward's study, The Australian Legend, tries to explain the role of the Australian landscape and the role of the bush in film and literature in terms of the "frontier theory" elaborated by the American historian F.J. Turner.[12] The Australian Legend draws upon literature, folk songs and documents, to trace and explain the development of the Australian self-image. In Ward's view, the typical Australian is an inheritor of the last century's bushmen, whose prestige, not numbers, was always greater than that of city-dwellers. An answer to the problem of why such prestige should have been afforded the bushman in Australian culture is partly suggested by Turner's "frontier theory." Before Turner, the historians tended to explain the American past with reference to European influences. His achievement was to show how "frontier influences" were no less important to an understanding of the local history. According to Ward, the Australian outback performed the same function: it helped to develop national cohesion. Each country has its own "frontier." For America, this is the West and its pioneers; for Australia, this is the landscape of the interior and the bushman, a folk-hero who symbolizes the nation, the hero whose lifestyle and character differs from those of other nations. Like American pioneers, bushmen entered and conquered the alien landscape. They tamed the hostile environment, made it human, and thus performed a central civilizing, nation-building function. For Ward, the myth of the Australian frontier and frontiersman promoted the growth of nationalism and shaped the present-day stereotypes of "typical Australian" behaviour. On the other hand, however, according to Ward, the romanticization of the bush was promoted by the nationalists who tried to establish the difference between British and Australian culture.

In contemporary Australian cinema there is a conscious preoccupation with producing images that focus on the "Australian experience" and celebrate "Australianness." In his Australian Cinema 1970-1985, Brian McFarlane discusses images commonly projected by Australian films of the last decade: a man's country, mateship, anti-authoritarianism, a wide-open land, the Aussie battler, and the competitive instinct.[13] Apart from the landscape, Gallipoli contains all elements mentioned by McFarlane. As with nearly all Australian films dealing with the past, Weir employs these important elements of national identity and promotes them.

Weir develops the discourse on mateship by showing that the boys' rivalry and different attitudes towards war originate in their different family backgrounds. "It's not our bloody war, says Frank... It's an English war--it's got nothing to do with us." His father also tells him not to fight for the English, who murdered his grandfather "five miles from Dublin." The boys' attitude towards the war resembles the well-known stanza of Henry Lawson's The Ballad of the Cornstalk. He writes about the Boer War:

I'm going to the war, and I don't know what it's for,
But the other chaps are going with the Bush Contingent men,
And if I should stay behind, there'll be trouble in the wind
For my girl will throw me over when they come back agen.[14]

Unlike Frank, Archy grows up in a family with strong pro-British feelings and his joining the Light Horse is, apart from an opportunity to change something in his life, an answer to the call: "The Empire needs you!"

This mateship (comradeship among males) motif, frequently present in Australian cinema, and which Weir dramatizes in the relationship between Archy and Frank, is the leading motif of Gallipoli.[15] Mateship has a mythological character in Australia and is embedded not only in working-class values but is constitutive of the Australian male self-image. Always in the center of this myth is the bushman, whose attributes were later transferred to the Anzacs at Gallipoli. The virtues of the frontiersman suited the political situation. In his acclaimed study, The Australian Legend, Russel Ward makes a comparison between the character of the Australian soldier and the character of the bushman:

> Comradeship and loyalty, resourcefulness and adaptability are as necessary to the one life as to the other. And just as the bushman liked, on principle, to emphasise his

> "independence" from his masters, while being sometimes on good terms with the individual squatter, so the digger liked to be thought that he cared nothing for officers as a class.[16]

Paterson and Lawson, for instance, saw the bushman as the embodiment of all Australian virtues. They mythologize him and mateship in innumerable poems and stories. In his famous Shearers Lawson writes,

And though he may be brown or black,
Or wrong man there, or right man,
The mate that's steadfast to his mates
They call that man a "white man!"
They tramp in mateship side by side-
The Protestant and Roman-
They call no biped lord or sir,
And touch their hat to no man![17]

And thus, not surprisingly, the myth of Gallipoli and the myth of Australia are about men. The landscape of Gallipoli is reserved for men. Characteristically, as Brian McFarlane points out: "If the mateship is no longer an important motif in Australian literature, several films of the past decade have helped to reinforce the myth."[18] Some of the best known of Australian masterworks incorporate this motif into their narratives: Sunday Too Far Away, Breaker Morant (1980) and The Lighthorsemen (1987).

Archy and Frank's friendship, beginning with their first athletic rivalry, the Freemantle race, is continued throughout the film. Its dramatization enables Weir to develop a personal story instead of an historical epic. He personalizes history and thus indicates concern with its human aspect.

Another important element of the Australian national identity, anti-authoritarianism, is presented as an anti-British feeling. Weir claims that "the larger issue is not the anti-British viewpoint, but the pro-Australian viewpoint,"[19] though these two elements are inseparably linked in the film. British officers are caricaturized as monocled and moustached cynics and their treatment of Anzac troops as unfair. The British officer comments about Australians who ape him riding on donkeys: "You Australians are crude, undisciplined and the most ill-mannered soldiers I've ever encountered." The Anzac's sacrifice is contrasted with the selfishness of the British who are "just sitting on the beach drinking cups of tea." Ultimately, the British are blamed for the massacre of Australians. Likewise, Bruce Beresford in his finest Australian film, Breaker Morant, while showing Australian participation in the Boer War, employs many anti-British stereotypes in order to win a sympathetic and positive attitude towards Australians. Historical complexity is not essential here - through the use of melodramatic conventions, the film works as a powerful political statement creating an image of "the scapegoats of the Empire."

Many of these same stereotypes of the negative Englishmen can be traced to early bush balladists' verses. For instance, Lawson, in "A New John Bull" describes an English gentleman who "shakes hands like a ladies' man," "hates to soil his hands," "removes the grime of gunpowder and polishes his nails." Lawson concludes ironically,

> Although he never showed a sign
> of aught save sympathy
> He was the only gentleman
> That shamed the lout in me.[20]

In his Social Patterns in Australian Literature Tom Inglis Moore convincingly elucidates the complex social circumstances where:

> The cultural clash was sharpened by the discord between English and Australian manners and speech. The educated English settler was repelled by the colonial informality, crudity, and coarseness. The native colonial in turn usually scorned refinement as an unmanly affectation of the English gentry and preferred to be "rough but honest," illogically equating the two and suspecting the sincerity of anyone refined.[21]

In expanding upon the negative image of the Englishman, while simultaneously creating and emphasizing the innocence of Australia (characteristically, the most innocent among Australian soldiers is named Snowy), Weir posits the outside world in its entirety as aggressive (embodied in war), dishonest (embodied by British officers), corrupted (in the Cairo scene) and marked by death (the scene at Gallipoli). Furthermore, to generate the sense of Australia's innocence, Gallipoli contains a sequence showing soldiers being recruited to the Light Horse. A wooden Trojan-like horse, symbol of cunning as well as imposture, appears bearing the appeal: "Join the Light Horse!" A similar point of view regarding the innocence of Australia as opposed to the corruption of the outside world is shared by Bill Gammage, whose book The Broken Years (1974), based on the diaries and letters of one thousand Australian soldiers during the Gallipoli campaign, emphasizes the innocence of the Australian soldiers clashing with the severe laws of an alien war.[22]

Both Weir and Williamson admit that their inspiration while working on the film was C.E.W. Bean's official history, The Story of ANZAC from the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915, first published in 1921. According to Bean, at that time an official war correspondent and later historian, Australian soldiers were the finest in the imperial army thanks to their bushman qualities.[23] This corresponds to Henry Lawson's description of Anzacs as "the youngest and strongest of England's brood!"[24] C.E.W. Bean argued that the digger at Gallipoli was the product of the bush: "The Australian was half a soldier before the war; indeed throughout the war [...] the Australian soldier differed very little from the Australian who at home rides the station boundaries every week-day [...]."[25]

Bean also stressed the democratic nature of Anzacs: the Australian army was egalitarian. Officers frequently fraternized with their men; they were not separated from soldiers. In the film, Major Barton (Bill Hunter), a fatherly Australian officer, is contrasted with the British officers.

Barton cares for his people and is on friendly terms with them. Their final tragedy is also his tragedy. British officers are presented as anachronistic figures, remnants of the declining Empire.

Competitiveness, another mythic aspect of Australia's national identity, is presented starting from the very first sequence. Archy's uncle is training him in a ritual-like fashion to sprint. The same ritual is repeated by Archy at Gallipoli before the final charge towards the Turkish trenches. The long sprint of the protagonist both commences and ends the film. There is, however, another, metaphorical, aspect of the race. In Egypt, Archy and Frank race toward the pyramid-tombs. Innocence is contrasted with experience and death. In an earlier scene, the camera portrays the Anzacs' camp at night against the pyramids. Australians' tents resemble small pyramid-tombs. However, the pyramids are not only symbols of death but also of immortality. Although the Australians' way to the trenches of Gallipoli is marked by joyful moments (e.g., the nurses' ball in Egypt, naked Aussies swimming underwater as if taken out of the reality above), the viewer is reminded of watching a drama - a powerful drama about virginity lost.

The same competitive spirit, as well as Australia's newness, is strongly emphasized in the famous scene of the Australian rules football match played against the background of the Egyptian pyramids. There is a clash between the young and old culture, naivete and craftiness. Later, at Gallipoli, where everything seems too serious and cruel for the Australians, this spirit is inappropriate; they senselessly die attacking the enemy. A freeze-frame of Archy Hamilton ends the film. This final frame shows one life that was ended too early, but at the same time the freeze-frame symbolizes, preserves, and immortalizes Archy via the cinematic process.

Some critics see the similarities between Weir's film and Hugh Hudson's Chariots of Fire (1981): both films have two runners-mates whose personalities differ distinctively, and both share similar narrative patterns. Nevertheless, as William J. Palmer states, there is a huge difference between the two films, which can be compared to "the difference between romance and reality [...] Gallipoli is Chariots of Fire for the real world."[26]

If the battle of Gallipoli marked for Australians the symbolic birth of their nation, Weir's Gallipoli plays upon the concept of the nationhood and on the self-image of Australians. Although it does not share the same optimistic, patriotic spirit as does, for instance, Charles Chauvel's Forty Thousand Horsemen (1940), Gallipoli pays homage to earlier films about Australia's participation in World War I and quotes Chauvel's filmic version of those events. The images of the battle already appeared in Alfred Rolfe's 1915 propaganda feature, The Hero of the Dardanelles, and, repeated many times over in later films, they survived almost untouched. Sylvia Lawson goes so far as to suggest:

> There are sixty-six years of history between these two intensely mythic shots [soldiers against the Egyptian pyramids at sunset--M.H.]; there is almost no ideological space between them at all. The first celebrates the Australian soldier; the second that mateship, which, Bean proposed, invigorated their soldiering.[27]

Although extreme in her opinion, Lawson accurately stresses the conservative character of the local film industry. In terms of content, Weir's film creates the same notions as Chauvel's Forty Thousand Horsemen; however, unlike its predecessor, Gallipoli reinforces mythic images of what is supposedly "Australianness." "In a country with a short history, the few high points become inflated into mythical proportions," says the scriptwriter David Williamson.[28] Weir's film does not intend to discuss real issues connected with "war", "patriotism", and "the nation." Instead, it tries to present the essence of the "true Australia" - a mythic, pastoral landscape peopled with mythic characters.

In its attempt, Weir's film corresponds with Sydney Nolan's pictures of Gallipoli. Nolan painted naked Anzacs who bathe on Gallipoli beaches. They are presented not as living figures but myths existing in Australian culture. They are archetypes vital to the national legend. Weir's Archy Hamilton and Nolan's diggers function as icons--ahistorical, myth-like figures constituting the Australian psyche.

We are dealing with a country where language is no longer a distinguishing attribute of national identity. In post-colonial nations, this situation causes a peculiar aim for defining the differences between coloniser and colonised. Local history and local characters are put on a pedestal as "noble, heroic or tragic."[29] All national cinemas manipulate the audience's emotion with powerful national symbols. Australian cinema is in the process of creating that symbolism by employing stereotypes of current and foundational myths dealing with Australia. The main task is to delineate the difference between Australianness and Britishness and yet to preserve the sense of British heritage. The images from Australian New Wave films do not show Australians as "second-hand Europeans" who "pullulate timidly on the edge on alien shores," as A.D. Hope wrote in his poem Australia,[30] but as descendants of noble bushmen and self-sacrificing diggers at Gallipoli.

Following Foucault, Richard White in his appropriately titled book, Inventing Australia, demonstrates the changing construction of the national image and the conscious attempt to produce an acceptable image of Australia. In the introduction he makes an explicit point:

> A national identity is an invention. There is no point asking whether one version of this essential Australia is truer than another because they are all intellectual constructs, neat, tidy, comprehensible--and necessarily false. They have all been artificially imposed upon a diverse landscape and population, and a variety of untidy social relationships, attitudes and emotions.[31]

The role of the Australian government in "producing Australia" on the screen is crucial. The period film, the reworking of some of the strategies of European art film, was heavily sponsored by the Australian government in the seventies. This genre, with its "art cinema" mise-en-scène and traditional narrative, gained cultural legitimacy by drawing on established literary authors and looking for inspiration in the literary and painting traditions. This "art film style," promoting "Australianness" through mythologized history and landscape, was welcomed by government funding bodies. The historical films were hailed in Australia as national cinema and were received as such internationally.

The image of World War I and the battle of Gallipoli are presented, of course, from a justifiably Australian point of view. "The story [...] gives us back our history. This is what having a film industry is all about," announced a delighted Phillip Adams soon after the film's premiere.[32] But what are the results of the image of Australia presented in Gallipoli? The question is whether the abuse of innocence, as a feature characteristic for Australia, does not sound anachronistic in our times. By refreshing old stereotypes, is Gallipoli able to help to create a nation? The answer is partly given by an approving attitude of the Australian school authorities: The Victorian Education Department produced the film study guide of Gallipoli for use in secondary schools.[33]

The emergence of Australian New Wave films coincides with the discussion on the national image of Australia. Anne B. Hutton views the growth of films promoting local history and landscape as a political and economic act For her, the decision to promote the outback was a reaction "to the encroachment of American values in urban Australia."[34] Heavily sponsored by the government, the period films produced more sophisticated images of Australia's past, acceptable for the domestic and foreign markets. By stressing the importance of the landscape and the rural virtues of the bushman, the period films offer a different kind of nationalism. They reinforce popular images of Australia earlier elaborated by the representatives of the Heidelberg School.

Weir's Gallipoli has been echoed in television mini-series which, though not always dealing with the same period, operate with the same established patterns and reinforce the self-image of Australians. Historical mini-series such as 1915 (1982), Bodyline (1984), ANZACS (1985), Vietnam (1986) and others are sentimental versions of Gallipoli. The crowning achievement of this subgenre is Simon Wincer's The Lighthorsemen, which even employs Weir's actors, but instead of two friends shows four, for whom the most important thing is "mateship." The outsider, Dave, who has to replace one of them, shares also many similarities with Archy. Although Dave is equipped with almost all bushman attributes, being an outsider and a city person he has to prove in action that he is worth the company of his mates.

Writing on Gallipoli, Sylvia Lawson asks the following vital question: "For how much longer must it be assumed that we should identify "Australia" with images of innocent youth, opposed by repressive Authority and doomed by forces beyond any visible source of control?"[35] Continuing Lawson's argument, one must deduce that the production of innumerable images of youth and innocence, as a feature characteristic for Australia, has become a local speciality. Gallipoli presents innocent Australians as characters seemingly satisfied with the fact that they are not English. Perhaps, therefore, this is what being an Australian means? Sydney Nolan puts it as follows: "There is a certain innocence about being an Australian. It is being part of a dream which hasn't been shattered or burnt out."[36]

This chapter discusses Gallipoli and its role in the debate on Australian national identity, not because Weir's film is unique in its presentation of Australianness but, on the contrary, because it is typical. This film cleverly validates existing stereotypes in order to articulate the Australian national identity. Populistic images, reinforcing values from the bush ("frontier" values), define a national character in contrast to the British one and explore how Australia differs from England within the context of a shared heritage.

Gallipoli and other Australian films of the New Wave period try to reconstruct a continuity between the past and the present in order to reinforce, rather than to deconstruct, the popular images directly taken from the mythologized past. Commonly projected images of the naive, innocent, "rough but honest" Australian male victimized by the British are repeatedly shown in Australian films. Moreover, Ward's thesis with its apotheosis of the digger-soldier as the embodiment of the Australian psyche, continually serves as a valuable model for the representation of the national type. The bush and the bushman still represent the "real Australia."

The strength of the current image of the Australian national character is its uniqueness and, as a result, the ease with which it can be promoted within and outside the country. It has only one weakness, yet a significant one--it has little to do with present-day Australia.

The inability to come to terms with the real Australian identity causes a peculiar situation. In Gallipoli and other Australian films the nostalgic, mythical vision of innocence is presented as "real" and employed in order to self-define and to project this image overseas. It may prove the assumption that, being unable to express their uniqueness, Australians have to apply mythic resolutions.

NOTES

1. Livio and Pat Dobrez, "Old Myths and New Delusions: Peter Weir's Australia," Kunapipi 4 (2) 1982: 74.

2. Claudia and Peter Fonda Bonardi, "The Birth of a Nation: An Interview with Peter Weir," Cineaste 11 (4) 1982: 42.

3. Pat McGilligan, "Under Weir and Theroux: An interview with Peter Weir," Film Comment 22 (6) 1986: 30.

4. Henry Lawson, "Song of the Dardanelles," A Literary Heritage: Henry Lawson (Octopus Australia, 1988), 155.

5. Phillip Adams, "Two Views," Cinema Papers 44-45 (1984): 71.

6. J. Eddy and D. Schreuder eds., The Rise of Colonial Nationalism (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 153.

7. Ibid., 144.

8. Bill Gammage, "Anzac," Intruders in the Bush. The Australian Quest for Identity, ed. John Carroll (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1982), 57.

9. Jane Freebury, "Screening Australia. Gallipoli: A Study of Nationalism on Film," Media Information Australia 43 (1987): 5.

10. George Seddon, "The Evolution of Perceptual Attitudes," Man and Landscape in Australia: Towards an Ecological Vision, ed. George Seddon and Mari Davis (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976), 13.

11. John Tulloch, Legends on the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia 1919-1929 (Sydney: Currency, 1981).

12. Russel Ward, The Australian Legend (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1974), 238-259.

13. Brian McFarlane, Australian Cinema 1970-1985 (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1987), 47.

14. Henry Lawson, "Ballad of the Cornstalk," The Australian Experience of War, ed. John Laird (Darlinghurst: Mead and Beckett, 1988), 18-19.

15. See a discussion in David Buchbinder's "Mateship, *Gallipoli* and the Eternal Masculine," Representation, Discourse and Desire: Contemporary Australian Culture and

Critical Theory, ed. Patrick Fuery (Longman Cheshire, 1994), 115-137.

16. Russel Ward, The Australian Legend (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1966), 231.

17. Henry Lawson, Poetical Works (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1964), 103.

18. McFarlane, Australian Cinema, 54.

19. Fonda Bonardi, "The Birth of a Nation," 42.

20. Lawson, Poetical Works, 43

21. Tom Inglis Moore, Social Patterns in Australian Literature (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1971), 99.

22. Bill Gammage, The Broken Years (Penguin Australia, 1974).

23. [see:] K.S. Inglis, C.E.W. Bean: Australian Historian (Brisbane: U of Queensland P, 1970). Bean's work, The Story of ANZACS from the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, has been described as the "Iliad and Odyssey of Australia," (20).

24. Lawson, "Song of the Dardanelles," Poetical Works, 156.

25. [from:] Richard White, Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981), 132.

26. William J. Palmer, The Films of the Seventies: A Social History (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1987), 244.

27. Sylvia Lawson, "*Gallipoli*: Picnic at the Pyramids," Filmnews, November-December 1981, 11.

28. Anne B. Hutton, ed., The First Australian History and Film Conference Papers (Sydney: Australian Film and Television School, 1982), 215.

29. Freebury, "Screening Australia," 8.

30. A.D. Hope, Selected Poems (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973), 13.

31. White, Inventing Australia, vii.

32. Phillip Adams, "Gallipoli," The Age, Melbourne, August 22, 1981: 11.

33. Louise Merryweather, ed., Peter Weir's Film of Gallipoli: Film Study Guide (Melbourne: Applied Media Resources, Education Department of Victoria, 1981).

34. Anne B. Hutton, "Nationalism in Australian Cinema." Cinema Papers 26 (1980): 153.

35. Lawson, Poetical Works, 11.

36. [quoted from:] Mary Eagle, "Painting an Australian Identity," Carroll, Intruders in the Bush, 189.

Chapter 7

BEYOND SHADOWS:

The "Mysterious Orient" and the Australian Psyche in The Year of Living Dangerously

> Without myth, the spirit starves, and in
> post-colonial Australia, we are going
> to build a new myth out of old ones.
> And I would suggest that these old ones
> will not belong simply to the European zone, but the
> Indo-European zone, of which India and Indonesia
> are both inheritors, as we are.
>
> C.J. Koch.[1]

> It's rather a bore to be half something.
>
> C.J. Koch, The Year of Living Dangerously.[2]

Since its first appearance in 1978 C.J. Koch's novel, The Year of Living Dangerously, has received a great deal of critical and scholarly attention. Apart from being the winner of the National Book Council Award for Australian Literature and the recipient of the Age Book of the Year Award, this novel was also successfully adapted for the screen by Weir, with Koch's involvement as a coscriptwriter.

The Year of Living Dangerously (1982) was a turning point in Weir's career; following the well-earned international success of this film, he has worked in the US ever since. It was also the first Australian film to be fully financed and distributed by a major Hollywood studio: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The film recreates the political climate of Indonesia in 1965. It deals with a group of Western journalists in Jakarta some months before and during the unsuccessful PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) coup which also brought to an end the reign of President Sukarno. Sukarno, the hero of Indonesia's fights for independence, was overthrown by the right-wing, predominantly Muslim, military establishment headed by General Suharto.

During his reign, Sukarno gave each year a name; from this follows the title of the book and that of the film. In his Independence Day speech of August 17, 1964 Sukarno called the coming year "the year of living dangerously," in a sense foreseeing the difficulty of managing the country with two radical political forces, the Communists and the Muslims, both trying to overthrow his government.

Certain elements permeate Koch's novel which tend to force the reader to take specific interpretative paths. Although realistic in mode, the novel contains a mythological framework which provides a set of possible explanations. The Year of Living Dangerously is modelled on *wayang kulit*, the Javanese shadow theatre. What is even more important, however, is that Indonesia and its culture are not simply an exotic, "oriental" background for the adventures of the Western reporters-globetrotters-observers. The indigenous Indonesian elements - the puppet theatre and the last year of Sukarno's power and his downfall - dominate and structure the work. Furthermore, the "oriental" element in The Year of Living Dangerously functions as the missing part of Western identity; it is an absent spiritual component of the occident. I argue that Susan McKernan is incorrect in stating that,

> When Koch writes about India or Indonesia, or even Tasmania [where he was born--M.H.], he draws out the strongest and most abnormal elements. He is not interested in the day to day life in each place but in the odd, the perverse, the exotic.[3]

Although generally praising the novel, McKernan accuses Koch of having a "tourist mentality" because of his presentation of the unknown as both glamorous and threatening.

I contend that Indonesia, as presented in The Year of Living Dangerously, is neither of the above. Koch provides a rather sympathetic picture of the country where living dangerously has become a norm for both local people and Westerners. This novel effectively deals with materials which, as D. M. Roskies points out, "customarily remain opaque to Western understanding."[4] The Year of Living Dangerously certainly is not an adventure story, nor, as McKernan seems to suggest, is it an exploitation novel aiming to attract readers through the use of "the odd," "the perverse," or "the exotic." Rather, it is a complex novel dealing with Indonesia which, furthermore, provides a discourse on the nature of the post-colonial state of mind, on the notion of Australian identity, and on the Australian perception of its Asian neighbours.

Weir's adaptation, with Koch's participation as one of the screenwriters, differs from its literary source in that while the former is politically oriented, the film moves from the political to the melodramatic within a political setting. Compared to Koch's novel, the film scarcely touches upon the complexity of political issues of the East, so as to concentrate on Weir's favourite theme of cultural clash: East versus West, and here, more specifically, a Western (Australian) journalist facing social upheaval in a Third World country which he does not really comprehend.

Another important change from novel to film is the choice of narrator. In the book, he is a foreign journalist, Cookie; in the film he is replaced by Billy Kwan, who, apart from being the film's narrator, is also a participant and the most powerful figure in the film. Compared to Weir's other filmic characters, Billy Kwan (Oscar-winning performance by the American actress, Linda Hunt) not only straddles two worlds but also, because of his mixed parentage (Australian mother, Chinese father), combines elements of both East and West. This factor, and the fact that Billy is played by a woman builds new meaning: Billy is a mixture of male and female, of the East and the West, but first and foremost, he is a man who tries to become a link between these two worlds. He is the person who helps to cross the barrier created by an inability to see and understand another culture. Hunt's role in the film is reminiscent of that played by the Aboriginal people in The Last Wave (mainly David Gulpilil's Chris). Furthermore, in some respects, the leading character from The Year of Living Dangerously, Guy Hamilton (Mel Gibson), an Anglo-Australian journalist newly arrived in Indonesia, in part resembles David Burton from The Last Wave, who, though representing the world of reality and Western logic, also tries to understand "another world" by combining both reality and dream worlds.

Weir's "generic" culture/nature dichotomy is replaced here with the conflict of oriental and occidental. The West appears embodied by the Western journalists. Nature finds its equivalent in the Eastern half: mysterious and incomprehensible to the outsider.

As a rule, Weir is preoccupied with the presentation of a middle-class WASP character facing the inexplicable, represented in his films by the Rock, Aborigines, the Amish, etc. His central interest lies in presenting the relationship between the two opposite forces (e.g., nature - culture; East - West) but not in explaining their sources, motives and rights. Somehow, he always remains at the surface. Weir seems only to need the "other side" (e.g., nature, East) to show the limitations of "our" culture (e.g., West, whites). Talking about The Year of Living Dangerously, the director claims that he "wanted a rather timeless setting in [the] background. The film was about Asia [...] and the background was to reflect that."[5] This is probably the reason this and others of his films may be seen as apolitical, romantic and superficial in their treatment of social issues.

This film is also a part of a bigger sub-genre which may be called "the adventures of Western journalist(s) in countries experiencing political and economic turmoil." This aspect of The Year of Living Dangerously is particularly well described in criticism: Weir's film often functions like another version of a journalist-adventurer myth, as part of a sub-genre about the Western journalist as a "Third World Watcher," of which Far East (1982), Missing (1982), Under Fire (1983), The Killing Fields (1984), and Salvador (1986) are the best known examples from the 1980s.[6]

Whereas some of the above mentioned films often exploit their exotic setting and concentrate on the misfortunes of people from different cultures, The Year of Living Dangerously, in spite of its traditional romantic narrative, contains a strong critique of Western ideology (nonetheless, it bears a resemblance to Weir's earlier criticism of "culture"). Carolyn A. Durham writes that, "Peter Weir's attack on Western ideology is thorough and relentless to the point of challenging both his own films and certain possibilities of film itself."[7]

Durham's view is particularly relevant in the case of Koch's novel which goes beyond the usual description of the incomprehensible, mysterious East. Instead of providing a typical critique of Western ideology, Koch concentrates on the opportunities offered by the "Orient" (Indonesia) and its culture. The Orient is not further "orientalized" by Koch; rather he attempts to understand and to explain its complexity. In this context, the *doppelganger* motif, the motif of the double, extensively employed by Koch and also by Weir, serves to show not differences, but similarities. In Billy Kwan, one of the most extraordinary figures in recent fiction and film, this idea is effectively embodied: he is a man of two worlds/cultures/races, a divided hero of post-colonial reality.

The doubleness, which may be considered a very Australian topic in the context of this country's colonial heritage and its present day isolation from the rest of the world, is the central metaphor in The Year of Living Dangerously. In Weir's film, Asia (Indonesia) is not a place of "the other," not a sinister "otherness," and not a threat to WASP Australia. The distinction between "us" and "them", Indonesia and Australia, is not clear. Indonesia, the East, the Orient function here as the missing part of Western identity.

The Year of Living Dangerously introduces "hybrid" personalities, protagonists alienated from their own countries, who have problems with their own identities. Both Hamilton and Kwan are displaced persons or, more precisely, men without a centre. Hamilton is certain that Europe is not his world, that he does not belong to the Northern Hemisphere. Looking at a photograph of Hamilton, Kwan notices a common feature between them: "We are divided men. Your father American, mine Chinese. We are not really certain we are Australian, you and I. We are not quite at home in the world." Neighbouring Southeast Asia offers more to the "rejects" of Europe. To come to terms with real, not imaginary geography means to overcome the sense of post-colonial isolation. On the psychological level, Hamilton's and other journalists' journey into the "otherland" may be interpreted as a search for the missing part of the self.

Like Koch, Weir tries to go beyond the "oriental," "exotic," or "melodramatic in an exotic setting" element of the Indonesian background. In order to organize his film as well as to add new meanings, he assimilates the ethos of *wayang kulit* into the story. He gives the audience an acceptable set of explanations by absorbing the notion of *wayang*.

"To understand Java, you'll have to understand the *wayang*," says Kwan. Teaching Guy to look at the shadows and not at the puppets while watching a performance, Billy tries to force him to go deeper into his understanding of the East ("The unseen is all around us, particularly here, in Java"). The *wayang* motif, its Indonesian context, and the *wayang's* significance for the narrative aspect of The Year of Living

Dangerously is frequently taken up by scholars.[8] Margaret Young suggests an interesting parallel between the *wayang* puppet theatre and Plato's famous cave.[9] Like the prisoners in the Platonic cave, *wayang* watchers can also only observe shadows which have to stand for all real occurrences. In order to understand reality they must rely on its shadowy images. This ambiguous, thin delineation between what is perceived as reality and illusion is further developed by Weir in his description of Western correspondents grouping in the "Hotel Indonesia's" bar. As Young notices, they are also "prisoners inside the dark cave of the *Wayang* Bar."[10] Ironically, they are voluntary prisoners who retreat into the illusory shelter of a bar for foreigners in a foreign country.

The motif of puppets is introduced at the beginning of the film: the *wayang* puppet show appears with the title credits. Later, Billy introduces the three major figures from the *wayang*: the hero-prince, the princess and the dwarf who serves the prince. Billy, who equates himself with the faithful dwarf, perceives Guy as Prince Arjuna who "is a hero, but [...] also [...] fickle and selfish." For Jill Bryant (Sigourney Weaver) he reserves the princess figure, Srikandi, "noble and proud, but headstrong, the princess Arjuna will fall in love with."

The use of the puppet motif is a carefully developed visual metaphor describing both political (President Sukarno) and personal (Billy Kwan) attempts to manipulate the people.

The President balances Left and Right wing forces within Indonesia in order to achieve an illusory unity of opposites. Kwan idolizes the dictator. For him, Sukarno is successful in his attempts to find an equilibrium between the Marxist revolutionaries and the pressures from the principally Muslim military. Sukarno also stages a performance of the puppet theatre for his ministers in order to covertly make known his will and future political decisions. The shadows stand for reality. Kwan, on the other hand, manipulates and controls other people; he keeps files on everybody he knows, and he is also a kind of *accoucheur* of the Hamilton and Jill relationship. The dwarf is introduced in the film right after the credits as he prepares his dossier on Hamilton. Later, sitting in his room at his typewriter he whispers: "Here, on the printed page, I'm master--just as I am the master in the dark-room, stirring my prints in the magic developing bath. I shuffle like cards the lives I deal with."

Both supreme puppet masters (*dalangs*) suffer defeat. Sukarno is replaced after a short but bloody civil war by General Suharto; a disillusioned Kwan encounters death while protesting against Sukarno's policy. Not coincidentally, Billy is the only one amongst the reporters who trusts and respects the President. Billy shares with Sukarno a similar standpoint and maintains similar policies realized, obviously, on different scales. Like Billy, Sukarno is also a man of dualities: both Hindu and Muslim by birth, a member of the aristocratic class yet a socialist, a charismatic manipulator of the masses and a demagogue, yet, at the same time, a man of considerable merit for Indonesia.

The political aspect of The Year of Living Dangerously is stressed from the film's opening. On his arrival at Djakarta airport, Hamilton is surrounded by anti-imperialist slogans and a hostile crowd of Indonesian poor. "Don't take it personally: you are just a symbol of the West," says Kwan, his guide to the "mysterious Orient." A group of Western journalists, isolated in their hotel and its bar within a hostile and incomprehensible country, deals with the Indonesian people in the manner of President Sukarno who, in Kwan's words, "uses the people as objects for his pleasure."

Political and sexual exploitation are strictly connected in the film. The Western journalists choose to stay "off stage" where they can be themselves. The representatives of the Western world cannot, or do not want to, overcome their inability to "feel" another culture. All are interested only in saleable stories, seem to be insensitive to the misery and suffering around them, and give priority to worldly pleasures over attempts to understand the political nuances of Indonesia and its problems. They seem to be satisfied with a voyeuristic relationship with the natives; they exploit them and observe their misery. The journalists are introduced to the audience in terms of their sexual perversions. A British journalist sexually exploits young boys. An American correspondent spends his stay in Djakarta in search of sexual pleasure. As Durham points out, "The camera [...] makes the connection between sexual and colonial exploitation, between erotic and ideological voyeurism."[11]

Up to this point, this film is reminiscent of Weir's earlier works: the incomprehensible East; bad and incompetent Westerners-foreigners; an innocent Australian; cynical Englishman (the British Military Attache, Colonel Henderson, who is portrayed as an anachronistic symbol of the Empire in the post-colonial reality). Into his portrayal of the ugly picture of the Western world, Weir introduces an almost mythic figure: Billy Kwan. The dwarf, because of his mixed parentage, combines elements of both worlds, East and West. Weir is perhaps intentionally ironic in portraying Kwan as a man of two "worlds," a dwarf-like human being, a synthesis of these two cultures but, at the same time, the strongest character in the film. In Weir's adaptation Kwan is a narrator and the moral centre of the film. Played by Hunt, Kwan is Eastern, Western, male, female, observer, and passionately involved participant.[12]

The tormented Australian-Chinese cameraman, who is the link between the two worlds, tries to understand and to help the Indonesians as much as he can. He repeatedly borrows a phrase from Luke, later used by Leo Tolstoy: "What then must we do?" He poses the same question in an emotional climax as his world rapidly disintegrates. After the death of his adopted child and having seen groups of starving Indonesians fighting for rice, Kwan, with photographs of local faces all around him, cries and passionately types this very question on his typewriter. The third song from Richard Strauss' "Four Last Songs," emphasizes this desperate search for a solution as well as expresses a deep sense of resignation. Kwan finds it in another small attempt to change the reality around him; his unsuccessful struggle to attract Sukarno's attention by hanging a banner with "Sukarno, feed your people" from a window, results in his tragic death at the hands of the security forces.

According to Durham, the relationship between vision and knowledge is the key to the meaning of the film. For her, this subversive, self-reflexive film "centres its critique on the conception and the function of vision."[13] The Australian reporter, most likely due to his youth and innocence, represents hope for Kwan: he brings the possibility of learning to see and feel in a new light. As a cameraman, Kwan is not only Hamilton's eyes ("I can be your eyes," he says), but also his "architect of images" combining seeing things with feeling them. Kwan devotes all his energy to teaching Guy to see (understood as "feel") the true Indonesia which is not very far from the *Wayang* bar in the Indonesian Hotel. He is Hamilton's "camera-eyes" guide. Losing Kwan, Hamilton loses the only chance to comprehend the world around him. The protagonist's inability to "feel" the real Indonesia is literally presented in the final sequences as his partial blindness. Hamilton's loss of vision (detached retina) serves as a metaphor of the Western inability to go beyond the external description of occurrences that differ from its own cultural assumptions. In the film's final sequence, Hamilton's Indonesian assistant, Kumar (Bembol Roco), a member of the Communist Party, puts it this way: "Billy Kwan was right. Westerners don't have answers anymore."

This film's main concern is with the concept of the "mysterious Orient," which is beyond Westerners' comprehension. In this context, the question introduced by MacBean in the subtitle of his article: "Mysterious Orient or, Merely the Insensitive Western Observer?"[14] is of crucial importance. Another important aspect of the film is the voyeurism of Kwan and of the foreign correspondents. The representatives of the Western world cannot (or do not want to) overcome their inability to "feel" another culture. They are satisfied with the voyeuristic relationship with the natives; they exploit them and find sadomasochistic pleasure in observing their misery. As compared to the journalists-watchers, Billy Kwan is the more complex voyeur. Because of his inimposing appearance, he chooses a handsome alter ego (a double) and thereby embellishes his image. When Kwan is convinced that his *doppelganger* is well-equipped with all of his virtues, he introduces Hamilton to Jill, a secretary from the British embassy, a woman Kwan is in love with. When Billy realizes that she does not love him, the dwarf promotes his "substitute" and finds pleasure in being close to the lovers. Then, he controls their actions, offers his flat to them, spies on them, photographs them and compiles dossiers on the lovers. Moreover, when the romance becomes a source of disappointment for him, he tries to put an end to it. "I believed in you," Kwan tells Hamilton, "I made you see things, I made you feel something about what you write, I gave you my trust, so did Jill [...] I created you!"

At first glance, Hamilton and Kwan seem to be opposites: a tall, physically attractive English-Australian and a tragic-comic, megalomaniac, Chinese-Australian dwarf cameraman. "We'll make a great team [...] you for the words, me for the pictures. I can be your eyes," states Kwan. Both Hamilton and Kwan, however, are "incomplete human beings": they have to rely on and supplement each other. On the one hand, Hamilton is an "object of desire" and worship for Kwan but, on the other, an object of manipulation and creation. Jill touches upon the true motif of Billy's actions when she notes that Hamilton is "everything [Billy] wants to be." Billy Kwan makes efforts to subordinate and shape Hamilton. Nonetheless, as in Gothic novels and horror films dealing with the relationship between the creator and the creature/monster (e.g., the Frankensteinian motif), the creature becomes a source of disappointment for the creator who inevitably cannot completely control his creation.

Kwan's character combines both voyeuristic and puppet-master elements. When the puppets gradually slip out of his hands his role (like that of President Sukarno) ends. Kwan has carefully engineered relationships with others (e.g., Sukarno; an Indonesian woman, Ibu, with a child that he supports; Hamilton) and between individuals (e.g., Hamilton and Jill); nonetheless, this construction collapses. Kwan's disappointment with Hamilton and his disillusionment with Sukarno leads the dwarf eventually to death. Like Sukarno, Kwan cannot control his creation: the puppets he once controlled slip out of his manipulative power to take on lives of their own. A puppeteer without his puppets is a figure of no importance, a master without slaves, a Dr. Frankenstein without his laboratory. The tragic death of Kwan serves to emphasize this moment of helplessness.

The Year of Living Dangerously is Kwan's film and his presence adds a new dimension to the film. The film begins with Kwan and with his voice-over comments introducing Hamilton, then the spectator watches most of the events from his point of view. His voice-over narration generates a specific mood into the film. Kwan's death marks the real end of the film. When Kwan is no longer on screen, The Year of Living Dangerously rapidly lapses into a cliched Hollywood film.

For the first time Weir employs the motif of romantic love, which he also presents in his following film, Witness. Interestingly, Jill's and Hamilton's romance, though it seems to dominate the film, is less important than Guy's relationship with his "creator," Kwan. Presenting and developing the romance, Weir is conventional. Both lovers look as if taken from an American dream: they are handsome, independent, ambitious individuals surrounded by the exotic and impoverished masses. Some sequences are familiar from hundreds of films (e.g., the eyes meeting across the room; the happy ending - reunion and embrace) and Weir does nothing to hide or modify these adopted images. On the contrary, as in his earlier films, the director does not attach much importance to "the story." For Weir, "the story" is always only a pretext to present ideas, and he does not even try to mask his intentions. He easily employs recognizable, only intensified images, in order to fix the spectator's (and his) attention on ideas.

The oneiric aspect of the film is achieved through consciously employed visual images. Russell Boyd's photography captures the tropical, beautiful but hostile Indonesia. The characters move in this dream-like landscape as if driven by an invisible force. Some sequences possess a nightmarish quality. The shots of Djakarta when Guy arrives on his first foreign assignment, the images of poverty-stricken Indonesians, the bloody military coup and Guy's desperate drive to the airport, shots of mist rising off the canals, the slums of Djakarta, a tropical downpour are the best examples of this. Moreover, Weir also employs a "real" nightmare, Hamilton's troubled dream of drowning which, incidently, is another Weirian water motif. Frequent shots through the windshield of Hamilton's car help to create a hallucinatory atmosphere. Oneiricism is enhanced in the use of shadows which are also used as a comment upon the puppet motif. They appear at the beginning of the film, then during the love scene (the shadow of kissing lovers), and when Hamilton broadcasts his first report (a silhouetted shadow on the window). Maurice Jarre's music plays an important role in generating this dream-like mood; its romantic tone mainly stresses the romance in the film.

In particular, in his first four feature films (Picnic at Hanging Rock once again being the best example), Weir "discourages" the spectator from following the story. Gallipoli and, especially The Year of Living Dangerously, in spite of their more linear narrative lines, only outwardly work differently. By presenting an easy-to-follow plot, Weir concentrates on creating an unusual mood and on discussing themes specific to him, this time not hidden in but apparent, even obvious, in the narrative line. It is possible to say that changes since Gallipoli and developed in this last film are in the method of presenting the story, and not in content. For some critics, The Year of Living Dangerously is the pinnacle of Weir's earlier works.[15] He successfully employs a conventional narrative structure and yet is able to infuse it with a recognizable personal style.

To return to the question concerning the image of the "mysterious Orient" in The Year of Living Dangerously, the "Orient" is "mysterious" because it is constructed as such. The term "mysterious," which signifies not only mystery, but also danger and threat, usually implies helplessness, if not ignorance and unwillingness to understand. To define a phenomenon as "mysterious" means to define it as the opposite of our "well-understood reality." In other words, it means to use sharp polarities: darkness versus light, them versus us, Orient versus Occident.

The "mysterious" is always the land of "the other." The Year of Living Dangerously attempts to "tame the other" by making it a part of our environment. By employing the mythological framework of the *wayang* puppet theatre, Weir's film tries to explore "beyond the shadows" with respect to our understanding of Indonesia. This framework not only serves as an exotic ornament, but, first oand foremost, as a serious attempt to understand the missing element of Western (Australia's) identity. In this context, Indonesia functions not as a "negative mirror" helping to define the notion of Australianness by serving as its opposite. It functions as a missing part of Australia's completeness.

NOTES

1. C.J. Koch, "Crossing the Gap: Asia and the Australian Imagination," Quadrant 25 (1-2) 1981: 7.

2. C.J. Koch, The Year of Living Dangerously (Thomas Nelson Australia 1978). (All references to the "Sphere Book" 1982 paperback edition, 85).

3. Susan McKernan, "C.J. Koch's Two-Faced Vision," Meanjin 44 (4) 1985: 434.

4. D.M. Roskies, "A View of Asia from Down Under: The Politics of Re-Presentation in *The Year of Living Dangerously*," World Literature Written in English 29 (2) 1989: 36.

5. Sue Mathews, 35 mm Dreams: Conversations with Five Directors about the Australian Film Revival (Melbourne: Penguin, 1984), 105.

6. See particularly: Carolyn Durham, "*The Year of Living Dangerously*: Can Vision Be a Model for Knowledge?" Jump Cut 30 (1985): 6-7; and her "Visual Politics in *The Year of Living Dangerously*: To See or Not to See." Perspectives on Contemporary Literature 11 (1985): 117-125. Also James Roy MacBean, "Watching the Third World Watchers," Film Quarterly 37 (3) 1984: 3-13.

7. Durham, "Visual Politics," 117.

8. For instance, B.N. Balajee, "The Fusion of Myth and Topicality in Christopher Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously*," The Literary Criterion 23 (3) 1988: 34-37; Hena Maes-Jelinek, "History and the Mythology in Confrontation in *The Year of Living Dangerously*," Kunapipi 8 (1) 1986: 27-35.

9. Margaret Yong, "Explorations in the Heart of Darkness: Turning Landscape into Art in *Slipstream* and *The Year of Living Dangerously*, Discharging the Canon: Cross-cultural Readings in Literature, ed. Peter Hyland (Singapore: Singapore UP, 1986), 29.

10. Ibid., 29.

11. Durham, "Visual Politics," 121.

12. The narrator of the novel, Cookie, is an enigmatic father-confessor to his fellow journalists who may be easily taken as the author in disguise - Koch is the obvious Germanization of "Cook." His role is to record events and to

comment upon them. It is a passive, neutral voice, left mostly uncharacterized by Koch.

13. Durham, "Visual Politics," 120.

14. MacBean, "Watching the Third World Watchers," 8.

15. For instance, Neil Rattigan's comments expressed in his insightful book on the New Australian Cinema, _Images of Australia: 100 Films of the New Australian Cinema_ (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1991), 325-326.

Chapter 8

WITNESS IN THE AMISH LAND

A culture can only represent itself to itself
(i.e., consciously acknowledge its own choices)
in relation to the contrasting practices of another culture.
Looking at others is the only way we become able to speak.

John P. McGowan[1]

Weir's first film set entirely within American film genres and the American cultural context, Witness (1985), brought him eight Academy Award nominations, including Weir's first Oscar nomination for Best Director. This film was awarded two Academy Awards for Best Original Screenplay (by Earl K. Wallace and Pamela Wallace) and for Best Editing (by Thom Noble). Witness is also Weir's major box-office and critical success, generally praised for its ability to combine the traditional American narrative formula with an innovative approach.[2]

Witness presents another cross-cultural hero, a Philadelphia police captain, John Book (Harrison Ford), forced by occurrences beyond his control to witness the practices of another culture, this time the culture of the American Amish. The collision of two separate worlds, the violent urban world of Book and the rural pacifist microcosm of the Amish, is the core of this film. It is this interaction of individuals from two different cultures or backgrounds, the theme of contrasted ways of life, that is a customary focus in all of Weir's films. The protagonist of Witness in many respects resembles the heroes of Weir's previous works, chiefly David Burton of The Last Wave. They are the same heroes torn between two worlds/cultures, both try unsuccessfully to mediate between these two worlds. In The Last Wave and in Witness the viewer explores the Aboriginal and Amish cultures respectively not from the inside but through mediators from his own culture. The Aboriginal and Amish communities are penetrated by witnesses from the outside world. As Richard Combs observes, the dreamtime of the Aborigines is replaced in Witness by the dream life of the Amish - a life out of time.[3] In this sense, Witness can almost be taken as The Last Wave in an American context.[4]

Witness can also be described as a romantic thriller, another variation on the standard American genre in an unusual rural setting which allows the director to present another clash of cultures. It may be also easily argued that this is, in fact, a redesigned Western formula as many features support this claim. Nonetheless, as with other films, Weir does not make a traditional genre film with a conventional plot. Witness is a cross-generic film, which employs elements of westerns, police thrillers and romances. This film is not only distinctive for its Pennsylvania setting among the Amish farmers, but also as an example of a perfectly executed mainstream film, yet, bearing the director's particular personal stamp.

In spite of the constraints of American big studio productions, Weir's capacity to preserve his "personal traits" is visible from the first scene. The opening sequence of Witness introduces the Amish and their gentle and anachronistic rhythm of life. In the first pastoral scene, the dark-clothed Amish emerge from the ocean-like field of green crop. The image is dominated by the waving grass as the Amish, some walking, some in their buggies, move in an unknown direction. Then, in a long shot the camera reveals a small Amish settlement situated among the "ocean of grass." The title "Pennsylvania, 1984" appears on the screen, superimposed over the Amish on their way to the settlement, and contrasts with the viewer's expectations of a historical-pastoral film set presumably in the nineteenth century American Mid-West. Weir opens Picnic at Hanging Rock and The Last Wave with a series of similarly well-composed shots. Witness, however, is less atmospheric and, to a large extent, relies on the linear narrative strengthened by the use of haunting images. From the first scene Witness is a well-balanced combination of straightforward, well-written screenplay and pure visuals: Weir turns an articulate Hollywood script into a recognizably personal work of art.

In the second scene, a collection of close-ups of the Amish attending the funeral of Rachel Lapp's (Kelly McGillis) husband, introduces the viewer to a community which is ruled by its own laws and tradition. The absence of English in the first scenes (only Luther's High German is used, as always in Amish religious gatherings) emphasizes the uniqueness of the observed community; it is also stressed by the plainness and uniformity of the community's clothing. These opening images, reinforced by the Maurice Jarre's ethereal score, show the Amish in their natural wide open setting and give a strong sense of community values. The next sequence, consisting of four shots, purely visual and without dialogue, focuses on reinforcing characteristics already introduced. It shows people working in the field according to the rhythm of the sun: employing Jarre's refined score and dissolves between shots, Weir suggests the other-worldly qualities of the portrayed community and its allegiance to the land.

After this brief introduction to the Amish pastoral life, the action moves rapidly to an urban setting. On her way to Baltimore, while waiting for a train in Philadelphia, a recently widowed Rachel and her eight-year-old son, Samuel (Lukas Haas), experience the brutality of the outside world. "You be careful out among them English," is the warning given to Rachel by her father-in-law, Eli Lapp (Jan Rubes), before she leaves the peaceful Amish community. His premonition is fully materialized. A brutal murder committed on an undercover narcotics officer and witnessed by an unnoticed Samuel is the beginning of events which allow the director to bring together two different cultures and contrast two different ways of life. Police detective Book has to deal with the case and, with the help of Samuel, discovers that the killers are corrupt cops, including his department chief and friend, Deputy Commissioner Schaeffer (Josef Sommer). Book, wounded by another cop, McFee (Danny Glover), and fearing for the safety of Samuel, is forced to escape the corruption of his own world and to seek refuge in the Amish community.

This unusual situation, which enables the protagonist to penetrate a different world, is often employed by Weir. As early as in his first feature film, The Cars That Ate Paris, Weir develops a similar idea: the hero (Arthur Waldo), clashing with a different nightmarish world in which he is forced to stay, is also a participant-observer of an unusual community. Like Waldo, Book involuntarily places himself in the hands of a different community. The police detective cannot be taken to the hospital in order to keep his and the boy's identity secret ("If they find me, they find the boy"). There is, however, one indispensable difference between the two protagonists: Book, a representative of the violent outside world, brings violence to the Amish community and his presence among the Amish poses a constant threat to the community; Waldo's presence among the grotesquely depraved community of Paris puts only him in jeopardy.

A similar narrative endeavour, in which the protagonist is placed in an alien environment beyond his comprehension (or his will to comprehend) is employed by Weir in most of his films, most noticeably in *The Last Wave* where another representative of the law has an opportunity to meet a different culture. With *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *Witness* shares its "ethnographic" interest in another culture. The protagonists of these two films, in spite of the encouragement from others (Billy Kwan, Rachel Lapp) choose a touristy approach. No wonder then, that in both films, separate worlds cannot merge and the boundaries between them cannot be crossed. Like the majority of Peter Weir's films, *Witness* is built on distinct polarities, namely:

The Amish - Mainstream Americans
Archaic way of life - Modern way of life
Country - City
Nonviolent world - Violent world
Harmony - Alienation
Innocence - Aggression
Insiders - Outsiders

Witness centres on the conflict of cultures. Weir constantly employs the otherness of the Amish and opposes their values and way of life to those of the "civilized" world. Descendants of Swiss Anabaptists, named after their leader, Jacob Ammann, the Amish settled in Pennsylvania in 1727.[5] They are mainly farmers and artisans, who, throughout the ages, managed to preserve their seclusion from the rest of the world. The Amish differ not only in their way of thinking but also in appearance. They continue to dress as their ancestors did, they reject much of modern technology, and their use of a dialect of the German language, which is generally described as Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch, sets them apart from the outside world. The incorrupt, straightforward nature of the Amish is also emphasized in Witness by the directness of their speech which sometimes creates humorous situations ("We are happy you are going to live, John Book. We didn't know what we should do if you died").

The conflict between the attractive agrarian way of life and the dangers of urban living organizes the film. The hostile, inhospitable city is contrasted with the cosiness and familiarity of the village. Going from the safety of their community, Rachel and Lucas find themselves in a world with different rules. The Amish in Philadelphia are in an alien and threatening "world of English." The first part of the film, in which the Amish community is introduced, prepares the viewer for the sharp contrast in the Philadelphia sequence. The search for the suspect in the black neighbourhood builds a strong contrast between the idealized rural and the hostile and dangerous urban by showing violence which is unacceptable among the Amish. Rachel stresses it distinctly by protesting: "We want nothing to do with your laws."

The irreconcilability of two cultures is shown in the scene when Schaeffer makes a phone call to the Lancaster police sergeant. Methods customary in an urban environment are useless in the Amish rural milieu: the Amish have no phones and the Lapp surname is widespread. The scene shows the inaccessibility of the Amish culture to the outside world. Schaeffer suggests to the sergeant that he "do some telephoning." "Yes, maybe I could," responds the sergeant, "but since the Amish don't have any telephones, I wouldn't know whom to call." "Thank you, sergeant. It's been an education," Schaeffer replies, giving up.

Witness can also be taken as a "meditation on violence," a film dealing with the question of non-violent behaviour in the face of violent assault. The film is framed with action/violence sequences and in the middle section simultaneously develops themes of love and violence. In his close reading of Witness, Wayne J. McMullen asserts that the Amish are portrayed as an attractive alternative to the violent urban life. He states that the ideological project of Weir's film is not only to acknowledge the attractions of a rural and pacifist lifestyle, but simultaneously, not to force the viewer to make choices between two incompatible ways of life: materialistic/violent and pacifist/agrarian.[6] In his perceptive study, McMullen focuses on this juxtaposition of agrarian and urban values and lifestyles but also on the methods, employed by the director, in order to invite the viewer to participate in the film's vision of Amish society.

McMullen's penetrating scene-by-scene analysis shows Weir's consistency in building our sympathy for the values represented by the Amish.

The viewer feels sympathy but does not identify with the Amish. Among other things, as John P. McGowan points out, the song by Sam Cooke ("What a Wonderful World") helps the audience to recognize the huge gap separating them from the Amish.[7] The audience's sympathy with the Amish is threatened by the very fact that they refuse to accept a song which, for some, plays an important part in their lives. The "utopian" aspect of the Amish life is, therefore, interesting but not tempting for the viewer, alternative but not acceptable. "If Amish life is utopian," states McGowan, "it is utopia forged by renunciation, a utopia unattractive in precisely the same ways that More's Utopia chills modern readers."[8]

The viewer, although appreciative of the peaceful lifestyle of the Amish, is ready to support any violent action executed by Book. In Witness' context, Book's violence is "pro-social," provoked, motivated, the only way to survive in a violent world. In many aspects Book acts like a lonely avenger/punisher from the series of films concerning "pro-social" (that is, intended to protect society) aggression. Dirty Harry (1972), Death Wish (1974), their sequels and countless imitations present heroes who, surrounded by violence and corruption, have no choice but to adopt violent methods as the only means to restore normality. The violence of these protagonists equals and sometimes surpasses that of the villains though their goal is always a "noble" one, erasing the violence by literally eliminating the evil aspect of everyday life.

John Book of Witness is given only this choice and he performs it with the viewer's understanding and support.[9] After learning about his partner's death ("killed in the line of duty" is the official version but the viewer knows that this was another of Schaeffer's acts) Book reacts violently against the aggressive rednecks who harass the Amish. By this act, he shows not only his frustration but also proves to the Amish that he has not assimilated with them: "This is not our way," says Eli. "But this is my way," responds Book. Aggression is met with aggression. The first part of this scene prepares the viewer to accept it as the only solution: the viewer is thus ready to endorse any violent action by Book.

Harrison Ford's policeman also finds himself in a situation typical for Weir's protagonists. In conflict with a different, closed culture, he questions his own values while witnessing an archaic, nonviolent world. The growing attraction between him and Rachel is suddenly interrupted when the outer world violently enters the Amish territory to encroach upon their serene way of life. A similar situation occurs in Weir's later The Mosquito Coast in which Fox's idyll in the jungle ends with the appearance of the mysterious bandits.[10]

The irreconcilable nature of the Amish and "English" worlds is shown at its best in the scene in which Samuel plays with Book's revolver. Book tries to teach the boy about the danger of a loaded gun, while Samuel's mother and grandfather present the Amish point of view on violence. "What you take into your hands, you take into your heart," states Eli presenting a glimpse of Amish pacifism. The intruding world of the English, however, forces Book to choose "his way." In a scene in which Rachel and Book dance to Cooke's "Wonderful World" the outraged Eli blames Rachel for bringing violence to the community, in a sense foretelling the final sequence of the film: "Rachel, you bring this man to our house. With his gun of the hand. You bring fear to this house. Fear of English with guns coming after."

Witness' polemics on violence, which is in itself a very American topic, places this film in the broader tradition of the Hollywood cinema. One of the most obvious and well-known examples is Fred Zinnemann's High Noon (1952) in which a Quaker woman (Grace Kelly) stands behind "her man" and acts against her own and her community's principles. Her husband-sheriff (Gary Cooper), deserted by friends, prepares himself for a deadly fight with the criminal avenger returning to the town on the noon train. In a decisive final scene, the sheriff's wife saves his life by shooting one of the aggressors from behind.

In her essay on the image of nonviolence in Witness and earlier films like Sergeant York (1941, Howard Hawks) and Friendly Persuasion (1956, William Wyler), Linda Hansen discusses a tradition in American cinema in which heroes try to avoid violence but, finally, are forced to accept it and defend themselves, their families or their country by being even more violent than the attacker(s). Hansen stresses the fact that, taking this cultural tradition into account, the viewer expects Rachel to act like the Quaker woman in Zinnemann's film.[11] Witness, nonetheless, does not follow this path. (This is also a recurrent motif in some contemporary action films in which a heroine, preferably a mother/wife figure, shoots the aggressor in the final scene, by that act not only protecting her loved one(s) but also the integrity of her family. Fatal Attraction (Adrian Lyne, 1987) and Someone to Watch Over Me (Ridley Scott, 1988) serve as good examples of this convention.) Instead of following this course, Witness ends with a show of the community's strength, of its ability to overpower the armed aggressor in a non-violent way.

There is a deliberate evocation of the Western genre in a scene in which the corrupt policemen suddenly enter the Amish land. In a familiar shot associated with the Western genre (figures framed from behind, Seale's camera shows their legs and guns in their hands), Weir announces the forthcoming duel. Dressed in professional-looking suits, the villains invade the non-violent enclave. They are, however, outmanoeuvred in a rural habitat alien to them by Book and by the Amish who stand silently but firmly behind him ("acting by not acting").

Harrison Ford's portrayal of Book belongs to a long list of characters inseparably linked with Hollywood mythology: a typical urban policeman/hero, smart, clean, incorrupt and straightforward. As a standard cop, he is single ("afraid of the responsibility," Rachel recalls Elaine's comment). As always, his work partner seems to be more important than women. Rachel's comment after her conversation with Book's sister describes his motives in the following way: "You like policing because you think you are right about everything. And you are the only one who can do anything." Schaeffer, when confronting Book's partner, Carter, points out that both the police and the Amish are "cults or clubs with their own rules." Both Book and Rachel break the rules of their "cults": Book by breaking the rules established by his (corrupt) superiors, Rachel by being attracted to a man from outside her community.

The clash of cultures, values and attitudes is once again more important for the director than a detailed examination of different cultures. Weir's nostalgic view of Amish life (another romanticization of "primitive" culture, this time "archaic rural culture") does not introduce new elements into our knowledge of the Amish community. Instead, some ethnographic observations serve only to emphasize the difference between "the modern" and "the archaic" and to observe people acting in both realms. The romance between two people from different societies creates a chance to bring together two separate worlds, nonetheless, the differences are insurmountable on both sides. The ending of Witness is characteristic for Weir: two different worlds/cultures cannot merge. Book has to return to his world leaving Rachel behind in the community to which she belongs.

By leaving the Amish community, Book enables Rachel's Amish suitor, Daniel Hochleitner (Alexander Godunov) to win her over. In the last scene, Daniel, who from the film's beginning demonstrates a romantic interest in Rachel, walks victoriously toward the Lapp's farm. Earlier, during the barn-raising scene, tension emerges between Hochleitner and Book; to the disapproval of the community, Rachel favours Book by serving him first. The threat of her being shunned is articulated by Eli: "Do you know what it means, he says, I cannot sit at table with you. I cannot take a thing from your hand. I cannot go to worship with you." The sensual, erotic and vulnerable Rachel tries to allure Book but he declines her unspoken offers. "If we would have made love last night, I would have to stay or you have to leave," he states the day after. As in some of his earlier films (for instance in Gallipoli and The Year of Living Dangerously), Weir is interested in the personal dimension of the conflict. The conflict between the dominant culture and a minority culture is converted here into a romance which crosses the boundaries of cultures. The unfulfilled romance between Rachel and Book and the sexual tension between them occupies Weir more than the examination of the cultural clash.

The title of the film refers not only to the Amish boy, Samuel (his innocent gaze is often employed by Weir), but, most of all, to John Book. There are, in fact, two witnesses in the film: Samuel, who observes the alien world of the English, and Book, who witnesses the anachronistic life of the Amish. Both cultures look at each other through their representatives. The innocent gaze of the boy is juxtaposed with the "conscious" look of the policeman. Weir employs a subjective camera technique to enhance the identification with the Amish. The first part of the film, and especially the Philadelphia sequence, is shown from Samuel's point of view. The viewer shares his amazement ("You'll see so many things" - Hochleitner's words) in the scenes preceding the murder and then his horror afterwards. Weir employs many low-angle shots to emphasize the boy's perspective. The frame composition in the scene, when Samuel explores the train station, is filled with visual stimuli experienced by Samuel: "normally" dressed people, a water fountain, a Hasidic Jew whom the boy takes for an Amish, a large statue with an angel.

Identification with Samuel's look makes the graphic murder scene even more explicit. The innocent gaze of the boy is brutally interrupted by the invasion of violence from the outside world: the viewer experiences Samuel's terror while witnessing the scene alien to his world. Shown mostly from his point of view, the murder scene heightens the emotional impact on the viewer. Another scene shown from Samuel's perspective (both physical and psychological) is the identification of the killer as the police inspector, McFee. In this particular scene, intensified by Jarre's music, Weir employs his characteristic visual style. Slow zoom towards McFee's photo, displayed to honor his achievements as a policeman, reflects the boy's moment of discovery. Then, Weir cross-cuts close-ups of Samuel and Book. When Book catches Samuel's glance he moves in slow motion towards the boy. The whole scene, done in unreal, slow-motion speed, bears a strong resemblance to several scenes from Weir's Picnic at Hanging Rock, for instance, the girls' ascent towards the rock.

After the discovery of the murderers' true identity, Samuel's perspective is no longer needed. His central position is taken by Book and the romance between the policeman and Rachel. With the flow of time the action moves once again to the rural setting and the perspective of the policeman becomes the dominant one. Through his eyes the viewer glances at the Amish way of life and discovers their world.

Cinematography by John Seale emphasizes the communal aspect of the Amish community and their link with the land. In the establishing shot, the Amish are presented as people of the land, a part of the natural landscape. To accentuate interaction between characters, the camera focuses on facial expressions. Frequent close-ups and telephoto shots fill the screen. There is, however, a difference in portraying the Amish and the representatives of the urban world. The camera deliberately creates the other-worldly qualities of the Amish: framing, soft lighting (the light of lanterns) and editing contribute to this impression. The images of the Amish are reminiscent of the great Flemish painters. In an interview done after the film, Weir acknowledges the influence of an exhibition of Dutch paintings called "Dutch Masters" which was opened during the filming of Witness in Philadelphia.[12] Vermeer's paintings are a source of inspiration for many shots, for instance, in the scene in which Book is healed by the Amish and nursed by Rachel. The unworldly look is reserved only for the Amish. The city dwellers, including Book, are portrayed in a "realistic" fashion.

Maurice Jarre's score stresses mainly the ethereality of the Amish community and plays an important role in creating a dated atmosphere. Together with Seale's cinematography, it emphasizes the innocence of the Amish in contrast with the aggression of the urban culture.

Some of the scenes in Witness, employed to emphasize the pastoral life of the Amish, approach cliche and resemble the style of television commercials. The barn-building sequence, for instance, an idyllic Disney-like scene, consists of shots emphasizing ant-like activities, harmony, labour division by gender (men building, women and children assisting). The motif of romantic love and the characterization of the saint-like Amish are equally obviously portrayed. Weir, however, seems to be aware of the banality of some of these images. Moreover, he intensifies and comments upon them; for instance, when Book and Rachel dance together to music forbidden to her (Sam Cooke's "What a Wonderful World") or in the scene in which Book mimics the television commercial ("Honey, that's great coffee!").

An easy to follow narrative line and familiar images from many films, which are fortified by Weir, serve as means for building a peculiar mood. As in his earlier works, Weir's method of presenting the story is subordinated to specific themes, ever-present in his films. Thematics contribute to oneiricism. However, if in his earliest works Weir builds themes through contiguity, small observations grouped in an impressionistic fashion, now he does so by introducing causality and a strong fluent narrative line.

Commenting upon the barn-raising scene, McMullen emphasizes its "mosaic-like style of editing" characterized by the fact that almost all the shots, which look like portraits in themselves, contribute to a general effect of a wholeness.[13] Although the visual style of Witness undoubtedly sanctions McMullen's assertion, it is rather Weir's early films which bear this characteristic. Picnic at Hanging Rock, in particular, is not only a collection of impressionistic images, but also its method of editing resembles an impressionist painting: the film lacks typical linear narration; rather, wholeness is achieved through the association and interaction of all the constituent elements.

Another important feature of Weir's style in Witness is the insignificance of dialogue. Instead, the themes are developed in purely visual terms. The Amish, excluding Eli's patriarchal comments, do not present their views verbally. The romance between Rachel and the policeman also develops without words. The impact of this film is achieved by cinematography and editing alone. McGowan believes, however, that the absence of dialogue, which advances the plot, limits the viewer to a "touristy" (insensitive from outside) approach. He remarks that, "What is striking about Witness is how completely its own encounter is limited to looking, which is keeping with film's dominant emphasis on the visual, but which does seem to condemn us to a certain superficiality."[14]

On one hand, McGowan asserts, Weir reveals a "delicacy about intruding too far," on the other, in order not only to stare at another culture but also to understand it, we always require "words of negation."[15] Weir does not repeat the mistake he made in the context of The Last Wave in which he could not abstain from naming things and from being too literal. In Witness he avoids explicit dialogues and limits comments to a minimum. He does so not because, as McGowan wants, the Amish have little to say about themselves, but because it is said in purely visual terms.

NOTES

1. John P. McGowan, "Looking at the (Alter)natives: Peter Weir's *Witness*, Chicago Review 35 (2) 1986: 42.

2. For instance, the Australian critic Sandra Hall calls Witness "the most elegantly constructed of all Weir's films," in which, while reworking the American formula, he retains his familiar features: "his eye for transfixing image, his feeling for ritual, his fascination with innocence and the sense of occasion with which he can enliven the everyday." Sandra Hall, "US Hit Bears Witness to Weir's Genius," Bulletin, 7 May 1985, 86.

3. Richard Combs, "Witness," Monthly Film Bulletin 52 (616) 1985: 167.

4. Robert Phillip Kolker, "Gun Lore: *Witness*," Cinema Papers, May 1985, 82.

5. See a study by John A. Hostetler, Amish Society (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 1980) (originally published 1963).

6. Wayne J. McMullen, A Rhetorical Analysis of Peter Weir's *Witness* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1989), 279.

7. McGowan, "Looking at the (Alter)natives," 12.

8. Ibid., 43.

9. A similar point is taken up by Combs in his review of Witness. He speaks of this "film's charming quality, the playing of Harrison Ford and Kelly McGillis - or the meeting cute of Dirty Harry and Grace Kelly from the Zinnemann film." Richard Combs, "Witness," 167.

10. As Combs accurately observes: "The dream ends when the men with guns move in." Richard Combs, "The Mosquito Coast," Monthly Film Bulletin 54 (637) 1987: 53.

11. Linda Hansen, "*Witness*: A New Image of Nonviolence in Popular Film," Journal of Popular Film and Television 14 (3) 1986: 136-141.

12. "Dialogue on Film: Peter Weir," American Film 11 (5) 1986: 14.

13. McMullen, A Rhetorical Analysis, 219-220.

14. McGowan, "Looking at the (Alter)natives, 41.

15. McGowan comments that, "looking at other cultures might stir the imagination, but the alternatives to our own practices formulated in response to that encounter require the words of negation, the words that can offer visions of absent possibilities," ibid., 42.

JUNGLE UTOPIA IN THE MOSQUITO COAST

> Nobody loves America more than I do.
> That's why I left.
>
> Allie Fox in The Mosquito Coast.

Paul Theroux's novel, The Mosquito Coast,[1] which is often described as his "finest imaginative fiction,"[2] has attracted film producers since its appearance in 1982. Jerome Hellman, the producer of, among others, Midnight Cowboy (1969) and Coming Home (1978), purchased the film rights and has been committed to bringing it to the screen. His engagement of Paul Schrader to produce a screenplay thus seems logical. In his script, Schrader, of Taxi Driver (1976) and Raging Bull (1980) fame, emphasizes the same maniacal aspect in the protagonist as he has done in his previous projects. The same people who made the successful Witness reunite to adapt Theroux's popular novel: editor Thom Noble, cinematographer John Seale, leading actor Harrison Ford and composer Maurice Jarre. In spite of this mutual effort, however, The Mosquito Coast (1986) has met with only limited critical and box-office success.

The main character of The Mosquito Coast, an eccentric genius-inventor, Allie Fox (Harrison Ford), is disenchanted with the United States and decides to emigrate with his family to the Mosquito Coast of Central America, to begin civilization anew in a small forgotten place called Jeronimo. Fox's quest for paradise, however, changes into a desperate fight for survival. Madly pursuing his unfulfilled dream of colonizing the new land, Allie loses his mind and life.

Schrader's screenplay is a faithful adaptation (and not an interpretation) of Theroux's novel. Nevertheless, in calling Weir's film a "textbook example of the dangers of literary adaptation," Terrence Rafferty rightly states that,

> By stripping the novel of its dense verbal texture, Schrader and Weir draw attention to the thinness of the story, bringing all its flaws to light: the sketchy, indifferent characterizations of the younger Fox children, the natives of the Mosquito Coast and, especially, Allie's long-suffering wife; the lack of surprise or tension in the action scenes; the essential monotony of the conception.[3]

These factors certainly contributed to this film's less than warm critical reception. Although Weir's film is a faithful adaptation of Theroux, it misses the spirit of the novel. As in Theroux's novel, Weir's film focuses on Allie Fox (valiantly played by Ford) who, in Weir's version, attracts more sympathy from audiences and therefore is more tragic than in the novel. Allie's oldest son, 13-year-old Charlie (River Phoenix), the voice-over narrator of the film as well as the narrator of the novel, plays a less active role in the film.

Everything and everybody is subordinated to the main character; his family is without any clear thematic role in the film as evidenced by the submissive, unnamed (also in the novel) Wife - "Mother" (Helen Mirren).

As in the novel, the role of the black characters in Weir's film is of secondary importance. With the exception of the Creole boatman, Mr. Haddy (Conrad Roberts), their portrayal is unidimensional and stereotypical. Haddy not only ferries the Fox family to their new jungle home, but also remains faithful to them and appears in key moments throughout the narrative. Later, even he is perceived by Fox as a threat to his absolute power over his family: his confrontation with Allie is portrayed like a Western duel. Anyone whose opinion differs from that of Fox finds himself in conflict with the protagonist. Like the Reverend Spellgood (André Gregory), Fox needs no partners, only followers to fulfil his vision. The Jeronimo villagers are presented as submissive, obedient, voiceless and, consequently, likeable figures. Like Allie's family they have no thematic role to play: they are part of the exotic landscape, passive objects of the white man's colonial experiments. The individuals are "premises rather than characters."[4] A similar objection is raised by Stanley Kauffmann, for whom the viewer of The Mosquito Coast gets only a "silhouette, proportionate but unrealized."[5]

According to Steven R. Luebke, Theroux's novel belongs to the "home-founding narratives" which repeat the story of the Pilgrim migration to America.[6] These narratives deal with the quest to establish a society free of corruption and a new social order in a new land. In opposition to the traditional "home-founding" stories, The Mosquito Coast begins in Massachusetts (the goal for the Pilgrim Fathers) and moves to Central America. Luebke points out that to invert the traditional formula is the predominant trend in recent "home-founding" narratives.[7] This inversion is intended as a means of critique of contemporary society. In order to accomplish his dream, the protagonist has to look for a new place beyond the traditional goal of former pilgrims/migrants, beyond the United States. Contrary to its older counterpart, the message of the contemporary "home-founding" journey is pessimistic and without positive solutions. The protagonist's journey usually ends in a disaster: he is unable to build an alternative society, for he is entangled in situations ironically echoing his experiences in his home country.

Several features contribute to the perception of Weir's The Mosquito Coast as a "home-founding" narrative. The protagonist possesses a passionate pioneering spirit and a desire for change. America no longer offers him an opportunity to show this side of himself. "I just work here - that's the attitude," he tells his son after a visit to the local hardware store. For Allie Fox, this is the source of the country's downfall. "Starting from scratch [...] This is what

I've always dreamt about," he declares. The maverick inventor ("nine patents, six pending") and Harvard dropout (Charlie states proudly that he only did so in order "to get an education") is driven by an unfulfilled energy, an urge to change and a sense of a mission. His desire is to bring civilization to the wilderness like the Pilgrim Fathers did before him.

Allie's pioneering, anti-authoritarian, unstoppable spirit has to find a new land to tame and to transfer according to his own vision. He has to build his own garden of Eden. To accomplish his dream he takes his family (wife, two teenaged sons and twin girls) to a jungle village. He escapes to an idyllic paradise which offers him a chance to fulfil his pioneering dream: to bring civilization (but without its side-effects) to the natives of the Mosquito Coast. The action moves from rural Massachusetts to the Central American tropical jungle where, in Jeronimo, he celebrates a Thanksgiving meal after finishing the first stage of the settlement. Shortly thereafter, his selfishness, as the driving force of his actions, becomes more visible.

Fox's desire is to build a utopia, a paradise in which a happier (perfect by definition) kind of life can be introduced. However, utopia (also by definition) is a non-existent place; the word comes from the Greek: *ou*=no; *topos*=place. Usually, dictionaries define the term "utopia" as a place that does not exist, a place of ideal proportion or as some kind of impractical scheme for improving the world. Fox's vision is carried out to its extremely undesirable conclusion: utopia turns to dystopia. Utopia, which is forcefully introduced (i.e., utopia in power) always brings disastrous consequences. The more utopia becomes itself, the more it becomes its opposite. The ignorant pursuit of illusory progress is the founder of most dystopias. For instance, Orwell's 1984, Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932), or Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano (1952) debunk the utopian dream of a golden age in which technology elevates the quality of life.

Another important reason for Fox's flight into the jungle is his growing belief and obsession that a civil war and nuclear annihilation are coming. After the destruction of Jeronimo, Allie tells his family that the United States has been destroyed, as he predicted, in a nuclear holocaust, thereby justifying his subsequent manoeuvres. He sees himself as a saviour of his family ("I rescued you") and madly decides to go deeper into the jungle. "We cannot go back," he explains. "Why?" - asks his wife. "Because (a moment of hesitation) it's not there any more... a cataclysm ...the end of that world." "That was Jeronimo!" - the Wife/Mother corrects him, but Allie knows better: "No, I'm telling you about the United States of America."

Theroux's The Mosquito Coast is permeated with the myth of Prometheus and Luebke sees this myth as crucial for the novel.[8] There are, however, only traces of the Promethean myth in Schrader's script which focuses on the protagonist's downfall without providing this broader mythological dimension. Allie Fox tries to bring technology to the jungle natives, tries to save them ("I'm here to help you") and, like Prometheus, is attacked by vultures in the moment of his death. With Prometheus, he also shares his sense of mission and the responsibility for all of mankind's problems. "I'm the last man!" - he states heading for the Mosquitian district in Honduras. There he creates an icemaking plant, appropriately named the "Fat Boy," which overlooks Jeronimo ("ice is civilization"). He tries to deliver this symbol of civilization to the inland natives; however, after days of journey, the block of ice has melted and he arrives with water - a symbolic scene which portrays the futility of his attempts. The natives at Jeronimo not only take for granted ice but also air conditioning and cold water which upsets Allie.

For Bruce Bawer, The Mosquito Coast also works as an allegory of the bonds between fathers and sons.[9] His comment is true only with regard to the novel in which the confrontation between the father and his two sons is a key element. Weir's adaptation, which fully focuses on the protagonist, bypasses this opportunity and tells the story of the unrestrained, mad individualist who endangers his family and himself in pursuit of his utopian visions. Allie's oldest son is merely a commentator rather than an active participant. As he emerges into manhood, the film reflects his disenchantment (but not open rebellion) with his father. The younger, eleven year old Jerry (Jadrien Steele), is more critical of his father. After the destruction of Jeronimo, the boys start to resent their father's tyrannical regime. They are disillusioned with him, but not confrontational.

The Mosquito Coast is framed with two voice-over comments by Charlie about his father. Charlie's "I grew up with the belief that the world belonged to him and everything he said was true," is placed at the beginning of the film. After Allie's death, Charlie's voice-over comment ends the film: "Once I believed in father, and the world had seemed small and old. Now he was gone and I wasn't afraid to love him any more. And the world seemed limitless." This is, however, rather a post-script to the novel than to the film: the confrontation between father and sons is not the focus of the film; instead, it is the steady fall of the protagonist into madness which commands the film's concentration.

On the other hand, Weir's The Mosquito Coast, like Theroux's novel, is also about adventure. Many sequences, particularly those showing the beauty of machines and mechanisms created by Allie Fox, resemble the charm of Jules Verne's novels; they are full of the praises of human beings, their knowledge and thoughts. "Science is worse than magic," the villagers maintain while helping Allie Fox's dream come true, in a sense foretelling the film's tragic ending.

The Mosquito Coast introduces a classic hero as an inseparable part of the American tradition, a type also present in two of Weir's earlier films. At first glance, Allie Fox appears to be a typical American hero-individualist, a strong individual with relentless energy, an embodiment of the American dream. As opposed to the reporter from The Year of Living Dangerously (Australian, but built on an American model), and the honest police detective from Witness, Fox is an obsessive character, an egocentric megalomaniac madly pursuing his own vision of the world. He is also presented as an embodiment of genius. "My father is a genius," says Charlie. A little later, however, he also perceives the other side of genius: madness.

The Mosquito Coast can thus be seen as yet another story about American individualism, inventiveness and emulation, about an American dream without, however, a typical happy ending. Weir's choice of Harrison Ford for the leading part is not a coincidence in this context. His name personifies the optimistic side of an American parable about the unrestricted possibilities of an individual: the screen characters of Han Solo in George Lucas' "star trilogy" and Indiana Jones in Steven Spielberg's Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) and Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984). But The Mosquito Coast should be taken as the tragedy of a strong personality, a film destroying myths about the individual's omnipotence, a film concerning, as Weir says, "an American tragedy."[10]

The film fully focuses on Allie Fox. In the opening scenes he works as a handyman for an asparagus farmer, Mr. Polski (Dick O'Neill), who calls Allie "the worst kind of pain in the neck; a know-it-all who is sometimes right" and "a dangerous man." Allie's task is to create a simple cooling system for the barn where Polski keeps his asparagus. This task, however, is not for a genius of Allie's scope. Instead, he creates a small machine, a tiny model of the future huge ice-making machine, "Fat Boy." Mr. Polski's rejection of the machine convinces Allie of the necessity to emigrate.

Weir's work deals mostly with the protagonist's weaknesses: the way the main character is portrayed indicates that The Mosquito Coast can be taken as an ironic comment upon the American tradition of a strong leading man. While John Book from Witness still shares many similarities with the hero of The Year of Living Dangerously, Allie Fox's character evidently refuses to believe in the unrestricted possibilities of an individual.

Watching Allie's behaviour, the viewer follows Charlie's evolution from enchantment to total disillusionment with his father. The film begins like the novel with the same dark vision of the United States and Fox's tirades about the decline of America. The protagonist is disenchanted with American civilization and numerous examples presented in

Weir's film support his view: America is corrupt, flooded with foreign goods and foreign workers, certainly not a place for such people like Allie Fox. Though Weir underlines that his film is not a way of commenting on America,[11] Schrader's script contains many such remarks. The vision of the United States is dark, quite different from the pastoral, rural America portrayed in Witness. "This country is going to the dogs," states Allie. The United States is full of crime, drugs and moral bankruptcy leaving Fox with the single option of saying "have a nice day America" and escaping into the jungle.

In the jungle, however, Fox also feels threatened, when he meets another strong personality, the Reverend Spellgood, a Baltimorean missionary, who commutes between his two churches: a drive-in in Baltimore and a mission on the Mosquito Coast. Fox and Spellgood are, to a certain extent, similar characters: both are hungry for new souls and unconquered territories, both demand total loyalty from their families and believers. Their first meeting on the ship to the Mosquito Coast foreshadows the power struggle between them. Allie corrects Spellgood's knowledge of the Bible and refuses to take a gift: "the latest, the blue-jeans bible," which was "designed by the psychologists." Their next meeting at Jeronimo is a real battle for territory. In a western-like scene Spellgood and his two native followers enter Fox's territory. They are pictured in a low angle shot from behind, a scene reminiscent of the scene from Witness in which the corrupt policemen enter the Amish settlement. Framed from behind, Fox, whose work tools look like a holster and gun, meets his enemy. The "duel" is a fierce exchange of verbal accusations. "The Lord hasn't any idea this place exists, or if he did he would have done something for these people a long time ago. But he didn't. I did!" - Allie states and forces the missionary into deserting "his" territory. Their next meeting is tragic. While setting Spellgood's church on fire ("Christian concentration camp," says Fox about the mission after noticing a barbed wire surrounding it), he is shot by the preacher and, as a result, paralyzed.

Allie's "Fat Boy" and Spellgood's mission function as symbols of conquering the land, of control over "their" territories. The ice-making plant is Allie's "church" of unrestrained technological progress. Magnified by the camera's low-angle shots, "Fat Boy" towers above the region. Its small prototype in Massachusetts is filmed in a corresponding fashion when taken by Fox and his sons to the asparagus farmer. The framing of Spellgood's mission is done similarly. Eventually, both "churches" are set on fire.

Another threat to the hero is a group of heavily armed bandits (guerillas?) trying to stay for good in the paradise built by Fox. While visiting an Indian camp, Allie, thinking that they are prisoners, tells them how to escape and invites them to Jeronimo. They come and take over Fox's colony. Fox's attempt to rid himself of them marks the beginning of all misfortunes for his family, and, eventually, highlights his madness. Fox tries to freeze the intruders in the "Fat Boy," where he has offered them shelter. Their desperate attempt to shoot their way out results in an explosion and their death, the destruction of Jeronimo and the pollution of the whole area. Ironically, the explosion of "Fat Boy" and the contamination of Jeronimo with ammonium hydroxide serves as a reminder of the protagonist's early comments on the threat of nuclear annihilation to the United States.

In Weir's interpretation, The Mosquito Coast can be taken as a comment on the American spirit as well as a picture of mental sickness. On a psychological level, the journey into the jungle is a journey into the self, a journey into the Conradian "heart of darkness." Allie's withdrawal from society ("this place is a toilet"), his megalomania ("I am your salvation" and "I am the last man") marks his journey into madness. This withdrawal is both psychological (Allie talks but does not listen, his anti-social behaviour) and physical (he leaves the country). In some respects Fox reminds one of another of Weir's characters: the lawyer in The Last Wave. Both individuals are convinced of their unique roles and, in pursuing their goals, they gradually descend into madness.

"I am Dr. Frankenstein," Allie dubs himself in the novel after creating his "Fat Boy" ice-making plant.[12] In the film, before delivering its small replica to Mr. Polski, he introduces his invention to his sons as a machine with near human qualities. During the scene, in the background of Allie's workshop a picture of a human skeleton hangs. "It is human inside. Its entrails and vitals: that's his digestive system, circulatory system, respiration, lungs, fatty tissues, kidneys, pneuma,...his plasma." When asked what it is, he does not hesitate: "It's perfection," he explains proudly, the same way Dr. Frankenstein would have introduced his planned creation.

Fox is a perfectionist who wants to correct God's imperfect creations. In the film's finale he confesses to Charlie: "It's a bad design the human body. Skin is not thick enough, too little hair, no claws, fangs. We were not meant to stand upright. It exposes our heart and genitals. We should be on our fours."

Fox's desire for perfection ("We are not perfect") is reminiscent of Dr. Frankenstein's desire to act against nature. Moreover, like Dr. Frankenstein, he is also betrayed by his discovery. The explosion of his creation, "Fat Boy," which produces a minor apocalypse for the Foxes and for Jeronimo's population, is the beginning of the end for Allie. He has to abandon the place he has already colonized. With his last words, "Nature is crooked. I wanted right angles and straight lines," Allie admits his defeat.

The Mosquito Coast differs distinctly from Weir's earlier works. This difference mainly involves the manner in which the main protagonist is treated. Unlike his previous works and the novel by Theroux, the director does not involve the spectator with Fox's adventures. The camera persistently follows Fox's non-stop talking and demonstrations of his new inventions. Particularly in the scenes showing the building of Jeronimo, the camera ridicules the protagonist and his jeremiads to the natives on the conditions of living in the United States. His examples are as strange for the locals as Spellgood's video-recorded preaching in the jungle with comparisons such as: "a prayer being just as simple as making a telephone call."

In the final part of the film, which occurs on the inhospitable beach of the Atlantic coast, Allie declares that his vision is to live "in harmony with nature." At the same time he scavenges like the vultures he hates.[13] Ironically, we are reminded of his behaviour in the United States where rather than purchasing parts for his inventions, he looks for them at the junkyard. Fox, in Weir's version, is a paranoiac and egomaniac, a madman and a narcissist, a man driven by his perception of the American dream. He is a tragicomic hero whose tragedy the viewer cannot take seriously because it is never taken as such by Weir.

Prior to The Mosquito Coast Weir's treatment of protagonists has always been serious; the more ordinary they were, the more solemn the attitude towards them, sometimes slightly tinged with irony. The Mosquito Coast, a film about an unusual character, is, as Richard Combs correctly remarks, "an unobsessive film about an obsessive character."[14] Even the last, tragic sequences do not beg the viewer's involvement. The director maintains distance from the protagonist thus depriving The Mosquito Coast of the mood of, for example, Werner Herzog's films staged in similar circumstances and with comparable characters played by Klaus Kinski: Aguirre, Wrath of God (1972) and Fitzcarraldo (1982).

Herzog's films are also about visionaries driven by their desire to establish their own communities in the jungles of South America. In Fitzcarraldo this is a man's desire to bring opera to the jungle, in Aguirre, Wrath of God, to conquer a new land. In both cases the protagonists are obsessed adventurers eager to fulfil their visions at all cost. In Herzog's films, however, the passion (creative madness?) is on both sides of the camera: these are obsessive films about obsessive characters, to twist Combs a little.

Certainly, The Mosquito Coast cannot be classified as Weir's highest achievement. The director did not attain what seems crucial for his artistic success - a mysterious, oneiric mood. Characters are unconvincing and the atmosphere is devoid of curiosity. However, in spite of visible stylistic dissimilarities, The Mosquito Coast contains patterns similar to Weir's earlier films, among them: an interest in cultural clashes, ironic comments on pop-culture, carefully composed images, and a sense of the mysterious which drives protagonists towards something unknown and potentially dangerous. On the one hand, The Mosquito Coast is a further attempt to develop the more concrete, less mysterious narrative strategy Weir began with Gallipoli. On the other hand, The Mosquito Coast is not imprinted with Weir's characteristic style; his favourite themes are hidden within the narrative line rendering them weaker and less convincing.

John Seale, the director of photography, tries to capture the imaginative elements in Weir's film. Compared to the painting-like images from Witness, the photography is now more realistic, sometimes even documentary in mood (the portrayal of Massachusetts, the jungle, etc.). Seale, one of Weir's frequent collaborators, does not beautify reality; his frequently moving camera reflects the restless spirit of the main protagonist. In Seale's words, the camera is always behind Allie "trying to keep up, just like his family."[15]

Thus, Weir's film, in spite of many similarities with his earlier productions, appears to mark a change in style. The director emphasizes that this evolution is conscious, planned and part of his personal development.[16] According to Weir, the film is very conventional in order "not to repel the viewer." As further justification for this shift, Weir suggests that the unconventionality of the film with its marginal, non-mainstream ideology merits unusual treatment.[17]

The *auteur* critics often admire films if they prove themselves to be a director's films. Nevertheless, The Mosquito Coast is a disappointment, not because it differs content-wise from Weir's earlier films, but because by giving up his personal style, he fails to replace it with something equally interesting.[18] In an interview done after releasing The Mosquito Coast, Weir claims that he has attempted to eliminate his own style as much as possible, like some sort of "personal cultural revolution."[19] From history we have learned that every revolution generates its own victims!

NOTES

1. Paul Theroux, The Mosquito Coast (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982).

2. Samuel Coale, Paul Theroux (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 115.

3. Terrence Rafferty, "The Mosquito Coast," The Nation 243 (20) 1986: 684.

4. Ibid., 684.

5. Stanley Kauffmann, "The Mosquito Coast," The New Republic 195 (25) 1986: 26.

6. Steven R. Luebke, "Self Dark Circle: The Home-Founding Journey in Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast* and Stephen Minot's *Ghost Images*," Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction 30 (4) 1989: 227.

7. Ibid., 228.

8. Ibid., 230-231.

9. Bruce Bawer, "Life with Father," The American Spectator 20 (2) 1987: 34.

10. Pat McGilligan, "Under Weir and Theroux," Film Comment 22 (6) 1986: 30.

11. Ibid., 32.

12. Theroux, The Mosquito Coast, 155.

13. The irony of this final scene is more explicit in the novel. Allie and some birds (vultures and pelicans) are fighting over garbage. "Know why I hate scavengers?" - he says - "Because they remind me of human beings." In the book's powerful climax, the hero is attacked by vultures and a vulture rips out his tongue! Ibid., 309-310.

14. Richard Combs, "The Mosquito Coast," Monthly Film Bulletin 54 (637) 1987: 53.

15. Nora Lee, "Mosquito Coast: A Jungle Utopia Gone Awry," American Cinematographer 68 (2) 1987: 61-2.

16. "I am looking for ways to force change on myself. I am trying to drop stylistic aspects, to remove myself from the film, to allow other influences to come in, to find a fresher

approach, and not become too predictable. I am looking for a way to eliminate, to simplify, to rely on fewer tricks and gimmicks, and in a way I've been trying to do that for years." McGilligan, "Under Weir and Theroux," 32.

17. Ibid., 30.

18. Gary Hentzi stresses, that the result of this new approach is a film with a styleless style, "just another Hollywood movie with an unsalable theme." Gary Hentzi, "Peter Weir and the Cinema of New Age Humanism," _Film Quarterly_ 44 (2) 1990-91: 11.

19. Ibid., 30.

Chapter 10

CARPE DIEM: Idealism Versus Realism in Dead Poets Society

People are hungry. Dead Poets and films like
My Left Foot and Henry V are showing that people
want more rich and thoughtful movies.

Peter Weir[1]

To many moviegoers Keating has seemed a true hero.
[...] We might simply say that too many people are
susceptible to the pied piperism of a charmer
who feels undervalued by the system.

Robert B. Heilman, "The Great-Teacher Myth"[2]

The intriguingly titled film, Dead Poets Society (1989), portrays an inspiring, eccentric English teacher, John Keating (Robin Williams) at a New England boys' preparatory boarding school, Welton Academy. The film focuses on the conflict between a group of young people, who are about to make their first adult choices and the conformist world embodied by their rigid school and oppressive parents. The English teacher tries to introduce a refreshing atmosphere to the school by showing his students the possibility of making choices, of "seizing the day." The film traces Keating's relationship with his students and centers around his unorthodox teaching methods as well as the results they bring to the boys' lives.

As in his two previous films, Weir confronts his protagonist, a newcomer from the outside world, with a world of unusual beauty whose conservative norms have long since been established, and have always been strictly obeyed. The Amish, a protestant sect from Witness, and the tropical jungle of Central America from The Mosquito Coast are now replaced with a school imitating Eton. The newcomer-intruder must fail when confronted with an environment governed by its own principles.

Dead Poets Society belongs to the most successful of Weir's films. Apart from winning international recognition, like the British BAFTA Award for Best Picture and Italy's Donatello Award for Best Direction, the film also received four Academy Award nominations and one award, for Best Screenplay by Tom Schulman.

In its narrative, Weir's film is not an innovative work. Rather, it recycles old plots and strengthens them into a very emotional spectacle. Dead Poets Society is part of a group of numerous films dealing with inspiring teachers, for example, Goodbye Mr. Chips (1939) or Stand and Deliver (1988). Bruce Bawer accurately points out that Weir's film deals with the same theme as The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1969, Robert Neame).[3] In both films, the teachers, Miss Brodie and her later embodiment, Keating, are more interested in selfadulation than in the educational process. Both seem to need students for the sake of their self-love and narcissism. Dead Poets Society is also related to a group of distinguished, anti-establishment films showing the oppressive school system: Jean Vigo's Zéro de conduite (1933) and Lindsay Anderson's If... (1968) are the most famous examples. However, while both aforementioned films are borderline surrealist satires, Dead Poets Society is a serious, lyrical and romantically idealistic work. The theme of the hardship of puberty, magnified by the oppressiveness of the boarding school, is also frequent in some renowned Australian New Wave films such as The Devil's Playground (1976, Fred Schepisi) or The Getting of Wisdom (1977, Bruce Beresford), not to mention Weir's own Picnic at Hanging Rock.

From the opening credit Dead Poets Society introduces a mood resembling Weir's early achievement, Picnic at Hanging Rock. It is Fall 1959, the beginning of another year at Welton Academy, a secluded and exclusive boys school set in the colorful, tranquil hills of Vermont. The grandiose opening ceremony, which includes bagpipe music, candles carried by each student, and a pompous introductory speech by the headmaster, introduces a spirited atmosphere and adequately portrays the setting for subsequent action. The school's principles, "tradition, honour, discipline, excellence," later converted by the students into: "travesty, horror, decadence and excrement," are displayed on banners and presented at the inauguration of the new academic year. Intensified by Maurice Jarre's sublime musical score, John Seale's camera captures the boys' faces, nervous preparations for the inauguration and excitement. In a similar, inspired atmosphere Mrs. Appleyard's schoolgirls start their journey towards Hanging Rock. Two of them never returned.

Dead Poets Society does indeed share many characteristics with Picnic at Hanging Rock: the primordial Hanging Rock is now replaced by the equally mystical Indian cave - both elements of clear sexual meaning - and schoolgirls are substituted with schoolboys. A traditional, oppressive school run by a sinister headmaster is common to both films. Mr. Nolan (Norman Lloyd) performs a similar role to that of Mrs. Appleyard in Picnic at Hanging Rock. Furthermore, like Appleyard College, Welton Academy is an isolated, solid set of buildings overlooking a picturesque landscape. In both films, there is also a conflict between the closed and ordered world of traditional values, represented by the austere schools, and the resourcefulness and spirit of youth.

Nonetheless, Dead Poets Society is not just another (after Gallipoli) male version of Picnic at Hanging Rock. The title of the film comes from the name of a group founded by Keating when he was himself a student at Welton. The group members were dedicated to "sucking the marrow out of life," as Keating later explains to his pupils. Now seven of his students secretly revive the society by having night-time gatherings in a nearby cave: they read poetry, play the saxophone and socialize. This outwardly innocent act, however, is perceived as an act of defiance by the school authorities.

Dead Poets Society continues Weir's classic poetics of contrast and is built around sharp oppositions:

school - cave
knowledge - imagination
adults - youths
realism - idealism
rationalism - romanticism
conformity - personal freedom

Dead Poets Society can be taken as an example of Weir's classic dualism: the world of knowledge is opposed to the world of imagination. Visually, Weir contrasts Welton's pseudo Gothic buildings with the primitiveness of the cave, youth with the oppressive system of education, realistic conventions of the day with the freedom of the night. The theme of *Dead Poets Society*, the choice that must be made between the pursuit of personal freedom and expression and a life of safe conformity, dominates the film. The theme of making choices, of making one's life extraordinary, is carefully developed throughout the film.

On the surface, this is another film about the effect of a charismatic teacher on a group of students. What is, however, hidden under the surface of the story, is the idealistic, typically Weirian view, that nature is always repressed by culture. As usual, Weir sides with nature and in doing so, presents a clear distinction between the spirited world of freedom (Keating and his followers) and the strict world of oppressive pragmatism (the rest of the teachers and parents). The situation in the film is black and white without any chance for compromise. Everything is geared towards Keating's final moral victory and his portrayal as a scapegoat of the establishment.

In its presentation of characters, the film is transparent and manipulates the viewer's emotions in order to achieve an easy (in psychological terms) final effect. Weir is lucid in separating the good from the bad. Dead Poets Society portrays a one dimensional fictional world with a clear division between progressive and conservative, young and old. Weir's Welton Academy is a model school of rigid educational environment; his charismatic protagonist is the quintessence of what an inspiring teacher ought to be. Keating's students serve only as the inert objects of his manipulation. His style of teaching is contrasted with that of other teachers: passionate and inspired teaching as opposed to routine, boring, *ex cathedra* methods which fail to elicit any emotional response from the students.

As presented in the film, the world of the adults and authority figures is utterly bad; Keating is the exception to the rule. Parents in Dead Poets Society consist only of tyrannical caricatures of bourgeois fathers, obedient wives and voiceless mothers. In a sense, the title of the film inadvertently refers to their (adult) world. This is a generation of dead poets who have lost their sensitivity, their sense of freedom, not to mention their idealistic, youthful aspirations. The film seems to suggest that in growing older one has to kill an inner poet; the choice has to be made between seizing the day and a disciplined (in the film's context: boring) life. As usual, Weir takes sides with youth, imagination and rebellion.

Williams' character is charming by making other adults selfish and tyrannical. "Carpe diem," says Keating during the inaugural lesson, "Make your lives extraordinary!" He also encourages his students to learn to think for themselves and to find their own voice. The film is safely set in the late 1950s, when conservative norms flourished relatively unquestioned. Keating's explicit statements make him a harbinger of the rebellious 1960s. Keating's lines sound like revolutionary statements in a school whose main task is to cultivate the future political and business elite of the United States. Theatre and poetry are only ornaments to the "more useful" subjects. The boys' future has been carefully planned by their foreseeing parents who steer them to Ivy League universities and, eventually, to successful professional careers.

In Robin Williams' memorable interpretation, Keating, though he belongs to the realm of adult wisdom (but also boredom and routine), also represents the world of youthful rebellion and imagination. Like the majority of Weir's earlier protagonists (from Michael to John Book), Keating acts as a mediator between these two different worlds. He attempts to bring together what is incompatible: anarchy and order, youth and experience, day and night. How a man like Keating finds himself at Welton in 1959 remains the screenwriter's (Tom Schulman's) unsolved mystery.

The way Weir portrays Keating's persona has provoked many negative critical responses. For Robert B. Heilman, Keating, who is "a hot on-stage performer," belongs to the "Great Teacher" category whose representatives are remembered not for their teaching but for their theatrics. The opposite, "the good teacher," cares about knowledge and is focused on his students.[4] According to Bawer, Keating is portrayed as "a lonely, self-romanticizing egoist whose classroom style fosters a personality cult."[5] The critic also asserts that the film is unforgivably callow and sentimental about its subject: it promotes its hero who, instead of teaching, adores boys "like a neurotically possessive mother."[6] To attract their attention, for instance, Keating mimics different famous actors reciting Shakespeare. The emphasis is on histrionics not on educational process. The strongest attack, however, comes from John Simon, for whom, this is "the most dishonest movie, [...] a particularly plummy specimen of the pseudo-sensitive, pseudo-serious, pseudo-real film."[7]

Pamela A. Rooks argues that Dead Poets Society, instead of questioning values represented by the Welton Academy, rather reinforces them "in an unfortunate triumph of style over substance."[8] Harry M. Geduld seems to share Rooks' point of view. He believes that Keating wants his students not to make their own choices but to copy him and in this he is successful. Geduld points out that "Keating is a con-artist, not a brilliant teacher, and his students are his misguided victims. He performs stunts that underscore his persona instead of teaching literature"[9] In the powerful, emotional climax, in which students climb on their desk tops to "see the world from a different angle," they, according to Geduld, only imitate one of Keating's "stunts": they repeat one of his earlier examples of how to look at things from a different perspective. Rooks makes a similar point by stressing: "The dynamics of the scene are such that not to stand on the desk would have been the true expression of individualism."[10]

Given the film's potential, Weir's work disappoints as a conventional film about an unconventional character. Like Keating's style of teaching, Weir's film prefers easy effects over substance. Dead Poets Society targets the viewers' emotions which, during the first viewing, overpower any attempt at reasoning. For instance, in an emotional and well-executed scene, Keating wants his students to rip out the preface, or rather a mockery of academic texts, from their Understanding Poetry textbooks, written with a scholarly solemnity and without any "passion for poetry" by someone by the name of J. Evans Pritchard. Poetry cannot be measured, says Keating, cannot be described in quantitative terms. He does not, however, offer any real counter-proposition: "feeling" and "passion" are his only choices. In the last sequence of the film, the headmaster, Keating's replacement for the English class, returns to the realist writers, omitted in Keating's curriculum: the final triumph of realism over shallow romanticism.

Unlike most of Weir's films, Dead Poets Society is not about the effects that occurrences beyond control generate in the protagonist(s), but about the impact of an individual on a small group of people. The English teacher, himself a former student of Welton Academy, once voted "The Man Most Likely To Do Anything," is now back at the school with his charismatic personality and unorthodox approaches towards teaching. On one hand, Keating wants to encourage the boys' initiative; he wants them to respond to the beauty of language and express themselves in a unique way. On the other hand, the teacher manipulates his students, later resulting in the death of one of them, Neil Perry (Robert Sean Leonard).

The theme of death permeates the film right from its uplifting beginning and, in a sense, foreshadows Neil's suicide. For John Carroll, Keating, though he brings a liberating spirit to the school, functions also as an "emissary of death."[11] In an introductory scene the teacher shows a photograph taken in 1902 which pictures former Welton's students, now all presumably dead. When he remarks that "these boys are now fertilizing daffodils," the camera captures Neil's uneasy smile. "We are food for worms, lads!" - states Keating, and offers the alternative: *carpe diem*, seize the day, do not waste your life, make it extraordinary. In a later scene, Keating invokes Walt Whitman's "O Captain, My Captain," a poem referring to Abraham Lincoln's death. In another scene, during the Poets Society meeting in the cave, Neil reads a passage from Henry David Thoreau's "Walden,"

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

Neil's suicide, however, does not function in the film as an act of rebellion. The struggle between Neil and his domineering father (Kurtwood Smith), which constitutes the most important subplot of the film, can only be, according to the film's philosophy, solved this way. Neil, a gifted all-A student, defies his father's orders ("You will go to Harvard and you will be a doctor") in order to pursue his artistic goals: he wants to become an actor. In spite of his father's objections, he plays the figure of Puck in a school production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Unable to convince his father or to obey his orders, Neil chooses death. The cost of pursuing one's dream is high: for Charlie Dalton (Gale Hansen) this is expulsion from school; for Neil, death. The suicide is the only romantic solution to Neil's problems: trapped between his personal desires and parental demands, he shoots himself with his father's gun. The suicide scene invokes some painfully obvious symbolic, religious connotations: half-naked Neil slowly takes off Puck's crown, which resembles a Christ-like crown of thorns, and silently stands in front of the open window. Maurice Jarre's music introduces a sombre mood. In a slow-motion scene he goes downstairs to get his father's gun. The suicide itself is seen only through his father's reaction to it. He suddenly wakes up in silence and visibly disturbed looks for his son. He discovers his son's body and, in an extreme slow-motion shot, rushes towards him. The viewer is not able to see Neil's body. Like the girls in Picnic at Hanging Rock, he has moved into a different realm.

Visually, Dead Poets Society is among the most arresting of Weir's films. The film is enhanced by the masterful photography by John Seale, who worked with Weir as a camera operator already in the production of Picnic at Hanging Rock. Seale's camera catches images of Welton's countryside bathed first in gold and green and later in snow: autumnal images are followed by snowy winter landscapes. Stanley Kauffmann emphasizes that Seale "shoots the season like archetypal statements."[12] The photography creates the film's dramatic mood; as in Witness, the story is told through images and every image strengthens the story. In this sense, Dead Poets Society is one of Weir's most controlled works. The director avoids a surplus of dialogues and achieves the emotional impact purely cinematographically, through the precisely composed mise-en-scene. Williams and the group of young actors, though good in themselves, are submitted to the camera. Faces in close-up, which create intimacy, dominate the frame. The young actors do not act but simply *are* in the film, totally subjugated to the camera.

The atmosphere of Dead Poets Society is achieved by mise-en-scene, camera movement and the use of music (Maurice Jarre's fourth collaboration with Weir). In one of the film's most spectacular scenes, the director portrays the students going to their first nightly meeting in the cave. Wearing hooded jackets, the boys run in slow motion from the dormitory through woods toward the cave. Fog, and a surreal blue light, accompany the scene and enhance the atmosphere of mystery. The meeting resembles a secret fantastic ceremony. All gatherings in the cave are shot with unusual lighting of the boys' faces: each student holds a flashlight, then, during later meetings, a fire in the cave provides a source of light. Music in Dead Poets Society serves to enhance intimacy and the romantic spirit. Fond of classical music, Weir utilizes Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9" in the soccer match scene which, shown partly in slow-motion, stresses the students' physical liberation which, presumably, will later result in their spirits being freed as well. Jarre's familiar tones recall of the atmosphere in Witness and perform a similar role; the combination of imagery and sublime music creates the film's distinct narrative rhythm.

In a gesture similar to that used in his biggest Australian success, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Weir supports the story with glimpses at nature. Images of the landscape and wildlife surrounding Welton are intertwined with the boys' activities: in the morning during the first day of classes, the shot of flocks of wild ducks clumsily rising to flight is intercut with the beginning of school at Welton. In another scene, when Knox Overstreet (Josh Charles) rides his bicycle to see Chris, a stereotypical blond woman he is in love with, the birds start to fly upwards symbolizing Knox's animated mind ("*Carpe diem*, even if it kills me!").

In contrast with The Mosquito Coast, the director retains precise control of mood and atmosphere. It is, however, perceived by some critics as "overprepared,"[13] and "intensely old fashioned."[14] Pauline Kael, who is often critical of Weir's films, notes in her review, that this is "conservative craftsmanship [...] The picture draws out the obvious and returns itself into a classic." According to Kael, like Gallipoli, Dead Poets Society is a prestige picture, "with a gold ribbon attached to it."[15] In another, often-quoted, text she makes a similar claim on Australian cinema as a whole. She emphasizes the lack of excitement in Antipodean cinema and remarks on the Australian films from the 1970s:

> Australian films are like reading an old-fashioned novel [...] When Australians take a novel, and just carefully and faithfully follow it, they are giving you a predigested experience. [...] There is a security in a certain kind of film for an audience and 'Made in Australia' is almost like a seal of Good Housekeeping in a film [...].[16]

Kael sees classic (AFC) Australian films as worthy but dull, and she refers to the British classic film Chariots of Fire (1981) as "the best Australian film made outside Australia."[17] Her comments on the conservative nature of Australian films can be extended to Dead Poets Society, a film which, ironically, attempts to attack conservatism and to promote an anti-establishment viewpoint. In spite of that, the film is of a safe nature, superficially refined in describing the conflict, and resembles the familiar domain of high-quality television productions.[18]

The Year of Living Dangerously is already a partial exercise in melodrama. Neither does Weir avoid some elements of melodrama in Dead Poets Society; the final frames of the film are amongst the most striking in contemporary cinema in their emotional power. Nevertheless, Schulman's script is sometimes too close to television soap operas. Most of the subplots seem to be taken from the familiar realm of television, for example, Knox Overstreet's love for his cheerleader, Chris Noel, Todd Anderson's (Ethan Hawke) struggle to overcome exceptional shyness and find his own voice. Last but not least, the conflict between the dogmatic father and the son, an aspiring actor, resembles the stock conflict of a prime time television production. Weir strengthens these familiar images and creates an equilibrium between an "art film" and the realm of television "fast film."

The evolution of Todd Anderson constitutes the most absorbing subplot in Dead Poets Society. A disturbingly inarticulate character in the first part of the film, who is often compared to his brilliant older brother, he is in the process of trying to define himself. Keating comments that Todd "thinks everything inside him is worthless and embarrassing." The well-known line from Whitman's "Song of Myself," "I sound my barbaric yawp over the rooftops of the world," is used by the teacher to persuade his pupil to speak. Finally, he is "cured" by Keating who encourages him to simply be himself; to speak in his own unique voice without fear ("yell like a man!"). In the powerful final frames of the film, it is Todd who initiates "rebellion" after the suicide of his roommate, Neil, and the dismissal of Keating.[19]

Weir makes a traditional film with a 1960s flavour. Dead Poets Society is not a fighting film, but rather an overtly sentimental work which sacrifices its narrative potential for romantic, cliched imagery. Its ideology of individualism, its call for "finding one's own way" and rebellion is shown in a safe romantic way. The social reality in the film is sketchy and sacrificed for transparent symbolic gestures. Weir prefers the elevated and the romantic over the uneasiness and turbulence of teenagehood. The finale of the film, when the boys stand on their desks to follow one of Keating's examples, is the only logical end to the film. There is no real rebellion in the film - everything is lost in the lyrical, lofty romantic mist.

Dead Poets Society continues a mode started with Witness. The preoccupation with imagery, with details, is accompanied by the faultless control over the atmosphere of the film and the precise arrangement of dramatic moments. As a rule, Weir pays great attention to details which he chooses effectively and, I suspect, intuitively. To the qualities already well-known from his Australian period, Weir adds a competence for building and relieving tension and an inner discipline, which is, to a certain extent, imposed by Hollywood screenplays. In spite of a more mainstream orientation, to some extent, the director is able to preserve his personal style and to deal with issues always present in his artistic output.

NOTES

1. Katherine Tulich, "Peter Weir," (Interview with Peter Weir), Cinema Papers 80 (1990): 9.

2. Robert B. Heilman, "The Great-Teacher Myth," The American Scholar, Summer 1989: 420.

3. Bruce Bawer, "Poetry in Motion," The American Spectator 22 (8) 1989: 40.

4. Heilman, "The Great Teacher Myth," 419. In his illuminating and amusing essay Heilman goes far beyond the realm of the film and discusses Keating like characters in contemporary academia.

5. Bawer, "Poetry in Motion," 40.

6. Ibid., 39.

7. John Simon, "The Red, Red Robin Comes Blabbin' Along," National Review XLI (17) 1989: 54.

8. Pamela A. Rooks, "Woo Who? Exclusion of Otherness in *Dead Poets Society*," Australian Journal of Communication 18 (2) 1991: 75-83.

9. Harry M. Geduld, "Seize the Day?" The Humanist, September/ October 1989: 41.

10. Rooks, "Woo Who?," 77.

11. John Carroll, "*Dead Poets Society* and Our Times," Quadrant 34 (3) 1990: 39.

12. Stanley Kauffmann, "Boys' Lives," The New Republic 200 (8) 1989: 26.

13. Pauline Kael, "Stonework," The New Yorker 26 June 1989, 71.

14. Barbra Luby, "Dead Poets Society," Filmnews 19 (6) 1989: 13.

15. Kael, "Stonework," 71.

16. Pauline Kael quoted in The Imaginary Industry: Australian Film in the Late 80's, ed. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, (Sydney: AFTRS Publications, 1988), 68 (Special Issue of Media Information Australia 50 1988).

17. Ibid., 68.

18. This aspect of Weir's film is stressed by Evan Carton: "Carpe diem is not revolutionary poetry but America's premier cliche. In the current speech of the sons, it means 'go for it.' In the controlling discourse of the fathers, it is 'business as usual.' Evan Carton, "Better Dead Than Read: The Society of Poets," Tikkun 4 (6) 1989: 67.

19. For Tania Modleski, the repressed content of this film is related to homosexuality and, accordingly, Todd reveals signs of "sexual identity crisis" that "in a more honest version of the film might have been shown struggling to come to terms with being gay in a heterosexual, homosocial environment." Her comment seems to overlook the essence of the film at the expense of sexual politics narrowly understood. See: Tania Modleski, Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age" (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 137-145.

Chapter 11

A PARISIAN IN AMERICA: Green Card

Green Card is a test case, actually.
It's an *auteur* film, made overseas by an Australian director, with the involvement of French components.

Peter Weir[1]

Green is a color of hope. A green card which, in fact, is no longer green, means hope for many would-be immigrants. Green Card (1993) deals with a green card marriage which turns into real love that crosses barriers of culture, class and language. Weir's New York set film, an Australian-French co-production, appears to be his most controlled work to date: he acts as writer, director and, for the first time, as producer. The screenplay, as the director admits, was written specifically for Gérard Depardieu and, to a certain degree, draws on the biographical details of the French star.[2]

Green Card is an elegant urban comedy, a sentimental comedy of manners which is reminiscent of the romantic, screwball comedies of the 1940s and 1950s. It is also, as Verina Glaessner remarks, an "escapist fairy-tale" with a "sub-Roegian metaphysic."[3] We can accept without question the first part of Glaessner's comment: the film offers an escapist narrative though without a definite happy ending. The "sub-Roegian metaphysic," however, by which we may understand a realm of enigma, present in Weir's earlier works, is missing. Instead, Green Card is a transparent comedy of manners which sustains Weirian *auteurist* touches. The film's humour relies principally on the juxtaposition of two presumably incompatible ways of life and two supposedly incompatible persons, their mannerisms and differences conquered by inevitable love.

The film's protagonist, an enigmatic Frenchman, Georges Faure (Depardieu), attempts to get a working visa, a green card, in order to get a job in the United States. (We will leave aside the "ridiculous question" as to why a French subject would be so desperate to work in the New World.) However, the only way to accomplish this is to marry an American citizen. Brontë Parrish (Andie MacDowell), a native of New York, is also interested in a marriage of convenience but for a completely different reason: she wants to get a Manhattan apartment with a magnificent greenhouse which is only available to married couples. Though Brontë and Georges do not know each other, their common friend, Anton, arranges a paper marriage to solve their "existential problems." She does not even think of informing her parents and her boyfriend, Phil (Gregg Edelman) about her unorthodox decision. Her "husband," Georges, is not even able to learn her proper name (Betty instead of Brontë). At the initial stage both

Brontë and Georges are, however, successful in getting what they want. A marriage of convenience ("You don't have to see him again") turns into a "marriage of inconvenience" with the appearance of government investigators.

The inquiry of an immigration authority functions as a force beyond visible control, common to Weir's earlier films. It brings Brontë and Georges together and drives them to pretend to live in the same apartment. They have to share Brontë's flat for a weekend and learn about one another in order to prove that this is a *bona fide* marriage. Their artificial relationship, propelled by occurrences they did not anticipate, leads them to mutual discovery and, as a corollary, to affinity. Brontë and Georges replace incompatibility with enchantment, they move from convenience to romance. The opposites that originally repelled begin to attract.

In spite of the straightforward narrative and intended lack of sophistication, Green Card is in line with Weir's other films. As in other works, the film's energy comes from the clash of characters representing two different cultures. Two initially uncomplementary people and two disparate approaches to life, French and American, are being tested. Contrary to most of Weir's earlier films, the mutual discoveries in Green Card lead the protagonists to romance and a possible solid future relationship. Their final emotional separation brings sorrow as well as hope of future reunion. As in Dead Poets Society, the closing defeat heralds future victory.

The prime source of comedy in Green Card is the apparent irreconcilability of both protagonists. Their initial meeting at "Cafe Afrika" portrays this distinctly: Brontë first sees Georges from behind the window and a look of uneasiness, perhaps disappointment, appears on her face. He is introduced as a composer ("Are you related to *the* Faure, he is asked later at the Adlers' dinner party), though his behaviour and appearance place him among the working-class. But he is French. The Frenchness of Georges, his Gallic charm, and his affinity with old European culture are juxtaposed with the snobbish "progressiveness" of Brontë and her New York friends.

Georges is the diametric negation of Brontë: heavy smoker and drinker, a person who grabs every day of life, an individual with a complex, predominantly tough-guy past. Geoffrey Simpson's camera juxtaposes the fleshiness of Depardieu's face, his massive body and unclean, long hair with Brontë's aseptic, politically correct look and behaviour. Among clean-cut Americans Georges looks like a visitor from another planet. A porter at Brontë's house, Oscar, who believes in Georges' African adventures, comments about his sudden appearance, "When I first seen you, I thought: this guy just stepped out of the jungle."

Brontë is a member of the "Green Guerillas," an inner-city organization dedicated to the greening of the poor neighbourhoods of New York. The environment is her prime concern. "You care more for plants than people," remarks an outraged Georges. A middle-class horticulturalist and a vegetarian, Brontë is involved with another politically correct character: the ecologically minded, earnest but boring environmentalist, Phil. "I didn't like Phil," comments Brontë's best friend Lauren Adler (Bebe Neuwirth), "so earnest, my god." According to the film's logic, Phil has no chance when competing against the high-cholesterol Frenchman with a red-neck's demeanour but a decadent European sensibility.

Brontë is the cliched incarnation of sterile progressiveness, but it is Georges who represents what life is all about. He is multi-dimensional to excess: Depardieu's performance stresses this aspect and almost ridicules the protagonist. His character seems to be unreal, almost a caricature of Frenchness. "I just wanted to continue my life as it was before," Brontë declares. "I'm waiting for my life to begin," states Georges. It is she, however, who may change under Georges' influence, and "go French." As it stands, there is no room for personal development in Brontë's character ("you live out of a book," says Georges). She accepts Georges' continental charm and, in spite of her earlier reservations ("you silly French oaf," "you are so right wing about everything," "your manners are atrocious"), she begins to accept his unhealthy, decadent life-style. The clash of the stereotyped French and American, red meat versus bird seed, ways of life, structures the film. The viewer laughs not at Georges' habits but their incompatibility with the world surrounding him.

In the opening scene, a young black musician performs in the New York subway. A driving beat on a plastic can introduces a mood resembling that of The Plumber, Weir's early film about a similar encounter between a couple from two edges of society. In that film, the sound of primitive drums is associated with the uncouth working-class protagonist who invades the privacy of a female would-be academic. This encounter results in a sexual power game, psychological threat and the final victory of the woman.

Green Card, nonetheless, never moves into this Pinterian realm. Instead, it rapidly progresses into the familiar domain of operetta. Initial problems, the result of two different backgrounds, are gradually overcome. Everything is geared towards the final victory of love.

The film can be viewed as another variation on the beauty and the beast myth. In Green Card, however, the beast remains beast and never thinks about turning into a more acceptable creature. For this is a French beast with innumerable accompanying associations of old culture, sophistication and the Dionysian attitude towards life. There is no question of him turning vegetarian and to a body building routine. Like Dracula and Nosferatu he "invades" the new world. The anaemic beauty, overpowered by the intruder's hypnotic power, can only offer herself. The beauty accepts the beast as a beast; she is defeated by his inner beauty and sophistication.

Comedy is a new genre for Weir, though there are comedic touches in some of his earlier films. Nonetheless, particularly in his "Gothic period," it is a different sense of humour: bizarre, grotesque, reminiscent of black comedy. Witness and Dead Poets Society provide comic relief of a different kind: the contrast between the rural and the urban, and Robin Williams' "great teacher" show are the sources of comedy. In Green Card, Weir tactfully laughs at the "progressive" concerns of Brontë and those of her New York friends. Georges' "repulsive" character presents an alternative or rather a contrast. Both sides complement each other: only together, only compared with their opposites, thus their behaviour becomes a laughable matter. The comedy flourishes particularly in episodes involving cameo appearances of Jessie Keosian (whose role could have been better developed) in the character of old Mrs. Bird.

As a rule, Weir does not go too far with his criticism. He provides safe, old fashioned tea-time laughter and not mockery. The director is more interested in the melodramatic and the romantic than in comedy per se. His tendency towards sentimentalization prevents the film from going deeper in its account of events. Instead, Weir glides on the surface of phenomena and accommodates cliches. Apart from the characters, for instance in the scene showing a renovation of a poor inner city neighbourhood, which bears a strong resemblance to Witness' barn-building scene, Weir approaches cliche in his Disney-like portrayal of communal activities.

The melodramatic aspect dominates the film from its opening. The viewer awaits the inevitable final reunion and his patience is promptly rewarded. In the last scene the action returns to where it began: to the "Cafe Afrika." Through Brontë's eyes the viewer watches the same medium shot of Georges standing behind the window of the coffee shop. Romantic music anticipates the development of the action. Close-ups of long duration of the protagonists' faces are carefully intercut. The final run and embrace follows necessarily. The declaration of love is inevitable. Suddenly, she no longer cares about her greenhouse. In return, he invites her to France. An immigration officer, Mr. Gorski (Ethan Phillips), who escorts Georges to the airport, cannot hide his amazement. The opposites converge in an emotional spectacle applauded by the viewer.

Music greatly contributes to the atmosphere of Green

Card. Weir's use of music, nevertheless, is not innovative. Rather, he employs familiar scores in familiar situations: classical music for uplifting scenes, sweet pop music for creating intimacy, a Jean-Michel Jarre-like score by Enya for the motif of the race. Thus, in *Green Card*, Brontë's activities in the conservatory are accompanied by classical music. When she enters her magnificent greenhouse for the first time, Mozart's "Flute Concerto No. 1 in G Major" stresses her amazement and animated state of mind. The run for the appointment with the immigration authorities is emphasized by Enya's music. The joyful scene in which they prepare a photographic portfolio for an immigration interview is accompanied by equally cheerful Beach Boys' music. (This cliched aspect from a myriad of mainstream films is unmercifully debunked in numerous comedies including *Naked Gun* and its followers.)

The music builds tension between the characters and shows their state of mind. A dinner party sequence at the Adlers includes the most braggadocio scene: Georges' impromptu piano solo which helps Brontë to convince the wealthy hosts to donate their trees to the "Green Guerillas." Invited to the party by the Adler's daughter and Brontë's best friend, Lauren, and introduced as a French composer, Georges is instantly asked to perform. After producing pure cacophony, which shakes the viewer's belief that he is, in fact, a composer, he moves into the second part of his recital, an emotional appeal to the Adlers. Georges' action lessens the tension between the protagonists and wins Brontë over.

In another scene, which takes place after the unsuccessful interview at the Immigration Department, the lack of music stresses Brontë's emptiness and a sense of loss of the barely initiated love. After the hearing, she is accompanied exclusively by the noises of the street on her way home. Then, when she sits in the conservatory, the only sound is created by a rainfall. This "unnatural" silence stops when Brontë receives Georges' letter including the score of the melody he used to mumble all the time. The tune fills the soundtrack.

In spite of its thematic affinities with Weir's other films, Green Card is deprived of the usual sense of mystery. It is an exercise in formula filmmaking without any deviation. If, in the case of Witness, the formula constraints do not prevent Weir from filling the screen with "his" images, the straightforward and cohesive narrative of Green Card is paralleled by an equally straightforward film style reminiscent of prime time television productions. An unconventional love story is conventionally narrated and visualized. The film's transparency and its predictability leave no room for enigma.

NOTES

1. Katherine Tulich, "Peter Weir" (interview), Cinema Papers 80 (1990): 8.

2. Ibid., 8.

3. Verina Glaessner, "Green Card," Monthly Film Bulletin 58 (686) 1991: 80.

Chapter 12

THE DAYS AFTER: Fearless

> In terms of imagery and rhythm,
> Fearless is a stunning piece of filmmaking.
> Weir is a far more powerful visual shaman
> than he was in the days of The Last Wave... .
>
> Terrence Rafferty[1]

In the opening nightmarish and eerie scene, shot partly in slow-motion, a party of people meanders through a cornfield following Max Klein (Jeff Bridges) who guides the group to safety. Carrying an infant, Max appears at a plane crash scene. Pieces of debris from a plane are scattered across a field. From the air, the crash site looks bizarre; it appears to be more surreal than tragic, rather nightmarish than real. Unsettling sounds strengthen these images of an almost natural disaster.

Max wanders through the disaster site with a baby in his arms. The camera creates a sense of devastating disarray by portraying burning parts of the plane, people looking in horror, passengers' belongings scattered about. After leaving a young boy with some rescuers, Max is directed to a woman crying for her lost child. He leaves the baby with its mother and flees the disaster scene unnoticed. In a hotel room, still in visible shock, he takes a shower and carefully examines his body. He then rents a car and escapes to Los Angeles, without attempting to notify his family. He drives through a desolate desert landscape: his car looks like a lizard crossing a bush landscape in Picnic at Hanging Rock. A subjective shot shows his amazement at being alive, and lonely at the same time. Music from the Gipsy Kings cuts through the thus far muted soundtrack. The lively music, which bursts into the frame, stresses the affirmation of life, the protagonist's recognition that he is alive.

This mesmerizing Weirian sequence constitutes the opening of Fearless (1993), based on a book written by Rafael Yglesias, who also authored the script.[2] As in his Australian films, Weir achieves a sense of the extraordinary out of real occurrences. He portrays an apocalyptic vision which is similar in spirit to that depicted in The Last Wave. Sounds in the opening sequence of Fearless resemble in tone the Aboriginal instruments in The Last Wave and the eerie magnified sounds of nature in Picnic at Hanging Rock. Though shot in an almost documentary manner resembling a television report, the opening scene of Fearless focuses on the surreal rather than the bodily and the violent. Thus, instead of visceral horror, Weir portrays the plane disaster as an element which disrupts natural order, as a violation of nature. Given this, the plane crash in Fearless performs the same role as natural elements in Weir's Australian films: it shows the fragility of human existence and prompts actions which would be impossible under mundane circumstances. As in Picnic at Hanging Rock, however, Weir focuses on the changes that an uncontrollable occurrence brings to the protagonists' lives rather than on the event itself.

In recent years, Fearless is not the only film to deal with a plane crash: Hero (1992, Stephen Frears) and Alive (1992, Frank Marshall) explore similar territory. Weir, however, is not primarily interested in mocking the media and heroism (Hero) nor in an uplifting story about survival in an extreme situation (Alive). Though the plane disaster overshadows the protagonists' actions, Weir focuses on the days after. With Alive, however, Fearless shares its attempt to show the plane crash as horrifyingly "veritable" as possible and, in this respect, it supersedes its predecessor.

Certainly, Weir's ability to create a convincingly eerie vision of the crash enhances the film's reception. With the exception of a hostile comment from John Simon,[3] Fearless has been rather well-received critically. Furthermore, several critics listed this film as one of the best of 1993.[4]

The plane crash in Fearless brings together two people who, in ordinary conditions, would have had little chance of meeting each other. Dr. Bill Perlman (John Turturro), an airline therapist who specializes in post-traumatic stress syndrome, hopes to return Max to normality by introducing him to another suffering survivor, Carla Rodrigo (Rosie Perez), a young Puerto Rican woman who lost her child in the crash. Max and Carla share the same experience and the same mystery. Their brush with mortality is more important than their cultural and social differences. "We are safe because we died already," Max later explains to Carla.

Carla is also introduced in the opening sequence. Rescued from the wreckage, she cries for her baby. The plane bursts into flames behind her. She wants to return for her lost child but is forcefully held by rescuers. Then, to the viewer's surprise, it is not she who gets the baby that Max carries but another agonized woman.

After the crash, Carla is withdrawn and depressed. Unlike restless Max, she moves between her bedroom, full of burning candles and Catholic artifacts, and the neighbouring church. She blames herself for the death of her young son, Bubble. During the plane's descent, she holds him on her lap but, because of the impact of the crash, lets him go. She is haunted by the idea that she could have prevented her son's death. Like Max, Carla also withdraws from her family life and emotionally parts with her husband, Manny (Benicio del Toro), who seems to be more interested in insurance money than in Carla's mental state.

As usual, Weir portrays characters coming from different cultural and social spheres. Max and Carla belong to different social and ethnic strata though the experience of death they share brings them together. Allen Daviau's photography[5] puts these differences into focus, for instance, in his portrayal of the protagonists' apartments: the comfortable, modern white washed look of Max's home is juxtaposed with the bright colors of Carla's overcrowded apartment in a Latino-American neighbourhood. When Max enters her bedroom, the viewer finds a different world: candle lights, bright colors, religious artifacts, photographs of her son. Max's waspiness is juxtaposed with Carla's ethnicity and accent; his upper-middle class position with her working class milieu; the absence of religion with her religious environment; Max's professionalism with Carla's domestic situation.

In spite of these visible differences, Max and Carla need each other in order to overcome their problems. After the accident both question the value of their lives. Neither can return to social roles they successfully performed before. Max perceives himself as the saviour of the devastated woman; he brings her back to life. He feels "an overwhelming love" for Carla, as he bluntly confesses to his wife. Furthermore, Max also wants to persuade Carla to "disappear" with him but fails. Reluctantly rejected by Carla, he undergoes a metamorphosis which ends in his final acceptance of his upper-middle class, middle-age fate.

As in Weir's earlier films, the characters in Fearless are deprived of sexuality. Though sensual tension is created between Carla and Max, this film portrays an unfulfilled, asexual relationship between the protagonists who are attracted to each other.

When compared with Weir's earlier works, Fearless's clash of cultures seems not to be of vital importance for the film. Instead, an internal conflict and personality crisis dominate over the external political and social predicaments of the film. The characters are drawn together not so much because they differ but, on the contrary, are united in their mortal experience and current isolation from loving but bewildered families. Fearless, however, lacks a proper focus and in this respect resembles The Mosquito Coast and Weir's futile attempts to make Allie Fox a believable figure. The question of whether Fearless is a film about a plane accident, a personality crisis, another unfulfilled love story or a family melodrama is never posed.

In Yglesias' book, Max is presented in a more ambiguous, an almost ironic way. Weir, however, performs the same stratagem as he did in the context of Lindsay's Picnic at Hanging Rock: he abandons the ironic in favour of the solemn and the mysterious. He moves from the rational to the mystical. Whereas the book has two protagonists, Carla and Max, the film almost exclusively presents Max's perspective, to the point of turning, as Rafferty states, "his character into a Holy Fool."[6]

As we learn in a series of flashbacks of the crash, Max seemingly overcomes his phobia of flying and lapses into unearthly tranquillity. "I'm not afraid. I have no fear," he states immediately after learning of the danger. Displayed in slow motion, Max rises from his seat and moves towards a young boy, Byron, sitting alone. Among the horrified passengers and crew members, he appears as somebody with virtually superhuman qualities. The extreme situation requires an extreme response from Max. Facing the inescapable prospect of death, he helps other passengers, comforts them after the plane hits the ground and, afterwards, leads them to safety.

After surviving the disaster Max, a successful San Francisco architect whose routine business flight has been violently disrupted, attempts to recreate the thrill of the event. He seems to be emotionally devastated by the crash and his actions are odd. The protagonist tries to live completely without fear or maybe, according to the film's logic, he even feels immortal. From a phobia of flying Max moves to the euphoria of staying alive. After a near-death experience he does not hesitate to put his life into jeopardy again and again. He plays with fear and tests his limits: he balances on the edge of a high-rise roof, unexpectedly crosses a busy San Francisco street and eats strawberries to which he is deathly (literally) allergic. "I'm past all that," he explains to a former girlfriend whom he has not seen for almost twenty years. He also claims that the plane disaster was the best thing that ever happened to him.

Consequently, by acting strangely, he withdraws from every-day life and alienates his wife, Laura (Isabella Rossellini), as well as an eleven-year-old son, Jonah. Asked, for instance, why he did not let them know about his survival but disappeared without a trace, Max confesses to his wife: "I was visiting my past." "Why didn't you tell me?," asks Laura, to which he responds: "I thought I was dead." The euphoria of staying alive prevents Max from returning to earth. He cannot, or does not want to, see things around him. This leads inevitably to marital conflict.

Weir recreates the crash in a series of six flashbacks scattered throughout the story: four of them are seen from Max's perspective, two from Carla's. He places the whole graphic crash sequence in a powerful flashback scene at the end of the film. In the film's climax, Max almost dies for the second time after eating strawberries he is no longer immune to. His wife and the lawyer desperately try to bring him back to life. As he struggles for survival, he has a vision of the last desperate moments before the crash from the perspective of passengers descending to earth in an out-of-control plane. Magnified by the use of Henryk Górecki's "Symphony No. 3," the sequence possesses an almost metaphysical quality. This sequence, an achievement in editing and special effects, is captured mostly in slow motion close-ups of passengers (embracing, praying, waiting in horror) and interwoven with the disintegration of the plane. Rafferty accurately comments that this sequence is a "furious kinetic vision of things ripping apart, of the end of the world inside a thin metal shell."[7]

The final flashback sequence ends with a vision of Max departing for another world: the wreckage becomes a luminous passageway leading the protagonist to another dimension. It resembles images from Max's artworks which are discovered by Laura in his studio: illuminated tunnels, labyrinths, visions commonly associated with the final passage. As portrayed in the illuminated fuselage, Max acquires an aura of mightiness. When he is about to leave the world, Laura's desperate attempts to rescue him are successful. Max wakes up from his strawberry induced shock and, supposedly cured, expresses a desire to return to his previous safe life.

It is not difficult to see religious overtones in the film. Max, according to Weir, functions almost as a Christ-like figure, a saviour, "The Good Samaritan," as the press labels him. Carla responds to his "preachings" as follows: "What you are telling me? There's no God but there's you?!" In many respects, the way Max is portrayed emphasizes this aspect distinctly: his face is frequently "unnaturally" illuminated by natural sources of light, for instance, in a hotel when he is discovered by FBI agents or during the first meeting at his lawyers office. The lighting of Max, his frequent slow-motion portrayal, for instance, when he crosses the street at the red light, on board when he helps his fellow passengers and, above all, the whole final flashback sequence, add an extra dimension to Max's worldly existence.

Max ambiguous identity is developed and questioned throughout the film: he is at once a buffoon and a saviour, an angel and a monster, a merciless truth-teller not afraid of hurting those who hold him dear and somebody who, simply, no longer cares. The press wants him to be a celebrity, his wife wants him back, his lawyer wants him to be cooperative, but Max does not fit these roles. Committed to tell only the truth, Max alienates his friends and family. For instance, his attitude towards the widow of his business partner and friend, Jeff Gordon (John de Lancie), is very unsettling. On the one hand he comforts her and feels compassionate towards her. On the other, being a neophyte truthteller, he cares about himself only and refuses to help the widow collect the insurance money she deserves.

The ambiguity surrounding Max is, to a large extent, due to the intricacy of Jeff Bridges' performance. He does not make the Max character a fully likeable figure and his tense acting enhances the unsettling atmosphere of the film. Bridges has proven many times that he is capable of portraying multi-dimensional, emotionally disturbed characters with psychological problems, who go through a mid-life crisis and try to find meaning in a supposedly familiar world which suddenly turns against them. The roles he played recently, a psychopath in The Vanishing (1993, George Sluizer) and the troubled father in The American Heart (1993, Martin Bell) embody this quality. Max, in Bridges performance, undergoes a metamorphosis as he struggles to redefine himself and the world around him, a world he no longer values.

As in all of his films, Weir pays a lot of attention to the look of Fearless. In the crash sequence, for instance, slow-motion scenes and the zoom shots fill the screen. The extensive use of slow-motion, not only in the flashback scenes, adds an almost metaphysical atmosphere to the film, for example, when Carla notices a baby in the shopping mall, when Max crosses the road and risks his life on the roof, not to mention his final rescue by Laura.

Weir's dangerous tendency to oversentimentalize reappears in Fearless. The Christmas shopping sequence, in which Max buys a gift for his deceased father and Carla for Bubble, may serve as a good example. Certainly, Weir tries to accommodate this sequence logically: Max tries to convince Carla that Bubble's death was not her fault and "recreates" the plane crash in his Volvo with Carla in the back seat, holding a tool box in her arms. He drives into a wall. Both survive, slightly worse for the wear, but the film does not. Max ends up in hospital.

Max's lawyer in the film, Brillstein (Tom Hulce), an amicable parody of "lawyers-vultures," claims that post-traumatic shock is to be blamed for his client's odd behaviour. The lawyer hopes to negotiate more money in damages. He also acts as Carla's lawyer and that of the wife of Max's dead friend. His presence introduces some comic relief into this film oriented towards tragedy.

Like Weir's earlier productions, Fearless does not belong to a single identifiable genre. It shares with previous works an overwhelming sense of mysticism, the common thread that bonds Weir's films. Weir returns to the surreal, nightmarish realm portrayed in his best Australian films. The dream-like atmosphere of the film, the protagonist's withdrawal from everyday life and his obsession with himself is reminiscent of The Last Wave. Both protagonists, Max and David, are obsessed characters. In Max's case, this obsession is caused by the traumatic event he goes through - in David's case by things to come.

NOTES

1. Terrence Rafferty, "After the Crash," *The New Yorker*, 25 October 1993, 121.

2. Rafael Yglesias, *Fearless* (New York: Warner Bros, 1993).

3. John Simon, "Believe It Who Will," *National Review*, 29 November 1993, 69-71.

4. See, for instance, *Film Comment* 30 (1) 1994. Richard Jameson ranks *Fearless* in group "II" with such prominent films as Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and Kieślowski's *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* (44). Kathleen Murphy places the film among the ten best with *Short Cuts* by Altman, and, again, films by Kieślowski and Spielberg (45).

5. See comments on Daviau's work and his insights in Bob Fisher's "*Fearless* Explores Emotional Aftermath of Fateful Flight," *American Cinematographer* 74 (11) 1993: 40-51.

6. Ibid., 121.

7. Rafferty, "After the Crash," 122.

Chapter 13

PETER WEIR'S PERSONAL STYLE

> [Personal directors] are more interested in the way things look and feel and sound than in what they signify in general terms; more interested in mood than in narrative.
>
> Penelope Houston[1]

Weir's works can be taken as a good example of personal cinema. In personal cinema, the director imposes a unique stamp on his works, his films share certain similarities described as "personal style." Despite occasional variations, Weir's works possess visual and thematic unity. Furthermore, they are structured around one fundamental conflict involving the clash of cultures.

In "Weir's cinema" and "Weir's world" there is a feeling of enigma created by his films, a sensuous quality affecting feelings more than the intellect. Weir's world includes the enigmatic and the bizarre hidden beneath the visible, fragile surface of the rational. Fascinated by the domain between the unknown and reality, Weir carefully builds the tension between these two realms and tries to maintain an equilibrium between the rational and the irrational.[2] He devotes more time to building and maintaining the mood than to the development of the story. He is more concerned with the exploration of mystery than in giving ready solutions.[3] His fascination with the realm bordering the unknown and reality leads him sometimes, most notably in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave*, to a near literal confrontation between these two domains.

In spite of his refined, lush visual style, it is difficult to think of Weir as an innovative filmmaker. Rather he is an imaginative, intuitive, hopelessly romantic mainstream author who, while cannibalizing popular culture, is not absorbed by it, and can preserve his personal style.

Most of Weir's films distinguish themselves through a dream-like atmosphere and visual symbolism which is capable of mesmerizing the viewer. They are built on sharp polarities, namely:

Nature	vs.	Culture
Myth	vs.	Reality
Uncanny	vs.	Familiar
Innocence	vs.	Aggression
New	vs.	Old
Ideal	vs.	Real
Isolation	vs.	Opening

In the present pragmatic times, Weir may well be the last romantic among filmmakers. Thus, he sides with and idealizes the first group at the expense of the other. These opposites find their visual concretization on different scales:

1. Two worlds: Australia - Overseas (Picnic at Hanging Rock, Gallipoli); West - East (The Year of Living Dangerously); America -Europe (Green Card);

2. Two communities: Aboriginal people - White Australians (The Last Wave); Amish - Americans (Witness); Closed community - Outsiders (Homesdale, The Cars That Ate Paris, The Plumber, Witness, Dead Poets Society);

3. Different groups or kinds of people: Youth - Adults (Michael, The Cars That Ate Paris, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Dead Poets Society); Strong personalities - the Rest (The Mosquito Coast, Dead Poets Society); People with different educational and cultural backgrounds (Michael, Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Last Wave, The Plumber, Witness, Green Card, Fearless).

Weir's career is continuing and his style is evolving. He is continually assimilating many influences and incorporating them into what is recognizable as his personal style. Most of his works transcend generic borders and some of them, particularly from his Australian period, do not belong to any definite genre. Though he works within many genres, his films are rather hybrids or reworkings of traditional formulae.

In his artistic evolution, Weir has partly changed the stylistic pattern of his films. Gallipoli, his "graduation film," marks a barrier between two slightly stylistically dissimilar groups of films. The major differences between them can be presented as follows:

Before Gallipoli	After Gallipoli
Impressionistic narrative	Mainstream linear narrative
"Atmospheric" pieces	Genre Cinema
Spontaneous approach	Rational-professional
Australian themes	American themes

As indicated by these changes, Weir gravitates towards mainstream cinema. He tries to maintain an uneasy balance between the pressures of commercial, big studio productions and his personal vision. Before he left for the United States, Weir was already an established filmmaker with his favourite themes and a recognizable style. In spite of his move to Hollywood, he has managed to preserve elements of his artistic integrity: in his style there are clear elements of both continuity and development. The noticeable change after Gallipoli is, one may argue, correlated not with a shift in Weir's thematic interests, but with one in his method of visualizing them. Weir strengthens his narrative grasp; his new films introduce narrative patterns which are easier to follow and are less "atmospheric." To be sure, they belong to mainstream cinema, but, simultaneously, they contain Weir's familiar touches and themes: conflicts between incongruous cultures, protagonists' attempts to understand different cultures, characteristic visual images accompanied by his typical use of sound.

The principal interest of this filmmaker lies in observing clashes of cultures and the people involved. At the extreme, the ethnographic experience of the protagonist equals the viewer's. Questions, however, are left without answers ("Some questions have answers, some not," is the famous line from Picnic at Hanging Rock). The characters are driven by forces they cannot comprehend. Confronted with a series of inexplicable events, they are forced to deal with spiritual forces and/or obscure incidents for which conventional modes of understanding are useless. The protagonists have to test their knowledge only to realize its futility. In their struggle against mysterious environments and incomprehensible occurrences, the protagonists of Homesdale (Mr. Malfrey) and The Cars That Ate Paris (Arthur Waldo) anticipate situations faced by Michael Fitzhubert in Picnic at Hanging Rock, David Burton in The Last Wave, Jill Cowper in The Plumber and various others. They lose in their attempt to merge with another world and to understand it principles. (The only victor is the female protagonist, Jill from The Plumber.)

A sense of menace is achieved by confronting filmic characters with the supernatural and the irrational within ordinary occurrences. These confrontations are, in a way, peripheral for Weir. It is the individuals involved in confrontation who capture his attention. He shows their response to mystery. Unusual happenings, newly discovered cultures, bizarre situations test the protagonists' knowledge and their systems of beliefs. History as well as politics are personalized. In this respect, Sue Mathews is right by stating that Weir's concern is with "personal rather than political morality."[4]

Western knowledge disappoints if confronted with the world of myths, dreams and different cultural assumptions. The protagonist of most of Weir's films is an outsider who tries to overcome his inability to comprehend and communicate with an alien culture. In particular, Weir is interested in characters who suddenly find themselves outsiders - this is the initial premise of his works. What follows is a search for answers which are beyond rational comprehension. The protagonist's fascination with another culture is not accompanied by an ability to comprehend it. The hero has to lose when faced with occurrences larger than his capabilities, different than his cultural assumptions. The mystery of Hanging Rock cannot be solved, the aboriginal dream world is beyond the lawyer's understanding, East (Indonesia) cannot be understood by Westerners, the closed Amish community, virtually unchanged since its beginnings, shuns contact with outsiders.

The majority of Weir's early protagonists, including that of Witness, represent the world of logic and knowledge. Their roles include being mediators and witnesses of practices of another culture. The rational heroes perform equally rational professions: the lawyer, the reporter, the anthropologist, the cop. They penetrate worlds different from their own experiences, attempt to rationalize them, and finally (excluding The Plumber), fail. Irrational heroes dominate in Weir's recent films: the egomaniac adventurer Fox, the "Great Teacher" Keating, who values feelings more than knowledge, and the incomprehensible and disoriented Max.

If in the first group of works, the protagonist represents our (Western) logic which clashes with a world ruled by its own principles; in the latter one, Western logic is a mirror which allows the protagonist to see himself. The hero acts against our pragmatic principles: Max behaves irrationally, Brontë and George break rational laws and Keating promotes idealistic visions. As in earlier films rationality is the target of Weir's anti-intellectualism. Whereas in the first group of films the rational protagonist is defeated by occurrences that are irrational from his (Western) perspective, in the second one, irrational heroes lose within their rational environment, though, especially in Dead Poets Society and Green Card, their defeat bears a grain of future victory. Rational attitudes have no chance in Weir's world. He promotes his idealism in which everything logical and pragmatic must lose when competing against the illogical and the spontaneous.

In many films the characters function as symbols rather then real-life figures. The schoolgirls from Appleyard College personify innocence and repressed sexuality, the aborigines mystery and familiarity with nature, the Anzacs mythical bushmen transferred to World War I battlefields, the Amish tradition and the rejection of modern civilization. As symbols, the characters are frequently deprived of individuality.

In emphasizing the inability of our culture to understand people from different cultural backgrounds, Weir has the tendency to romanticize "primitive people" (e.g., the aborigines, the plumber, the Amish). Weir's anti-intellectualism, however, seems to derive from his attitude towards his own filmmaking: it is not in itself intellectual but spontaneous. To be sure, opposing nature and culture, Weir always sides with nature but it does not restrain him from making some ironic comments (e.g., Michael; The Plumber), offering an overtly idealistic view (e.g., The Last Wave; Witness, Dead Poets Society), and introducing nature as mysterious and sinister (e.g., Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Last Wave).

In Weir's world, it seems impossible to go beyond the constraints of a given culture and successfully merge with another one. He acknowledges the irreconcilability of cultures. The universal theme that appears in his endings - separated worlds, the protagonists retreating to their tamed reality - confirms such an assumption.

To a certain extent, the protagonists can be taken as personifications of Weir, his alter ego. They are usually his age and physical type, they are also getting older with him.

For instance, Weir's early films are peopled with youthful characters entering their adulthood (the protagonist of Michael, Michael Fitzhubert, Archy Hamilton). Since The Year of Living Dangerously (and including The Last Wave) they have been professionals obsessed with their careers, who witness corruption and lose their idealistic views. In recent films we have middle-aged characters who face middle-life crisis (Fearless) and fight to bring the flavour of the 1960s to the yuppie atmosphere of the late 1980s (Dead Poets Society).

Robert Winer in his psychoanalytically-oriented article claims that there is a relation between Weir's personal growth and the thematics of his films. Weir's works, according to Winer, show a development from "witnessing" to "bearing witness," that is to say "between taking in and giving forth, between passive registration and active testifying [...], between discovery and revelation."[5] Thus, Winer looks at Weir's five major films (from Picnic at Hanging Rock to Witness) as a reflection of the director's personal development: from passive witnessing in his early works mirroring adolescent problems through a coming of age (Gallipoli), to works dealing with contemporary concerns.

Though Weir is credited with the ability to create romantic tension, the motif of explicit sensual love, surprisingly, appears as late as with The Year of Living Dangerously. Romance, however, is usually an unfulfilled one.

The lovers have to be separated by forces of history/politics (The Year of Living Dangerously, Green Card) and cultural difference (Witness).

In spite of the fact that Weir frequently portrays almost asexual figures and that sexuality commonly functions in his films at the spiritual level, some critics tend to look at Weir's characters and the atmosphere created by his films in terms of repressed sexuality. Tania Modleski, for instance, claims that Gallipoli and Picnic at Hanging Rock are pervaded with "lyrical homoeroticism" and, furthermore, that Dead Poets Society is a vivid example of a film with repressed content "related to homoeroticism and gay sexuality."[6] Gary Hentzi sees Weir's "persistent interest in homosexuality" as implicitly shown in several of his major films.[7] The aforementioned comments suggest, in my opinion, meanings rather marginal for Weir's *oeuvre*. The sensual atmosphere and the lack of explicit sexuality in most of Weir's works cannot be taken automatically as another case of the "return of the repressed," indescribable content, especially in our age in which so much can be said openly.

Given the fact that Weir pays great attention to the visual quality of his films, it comes as no surprise that he prefers meaningful images at the expense of dialogue. The images seem to be self-evident, his films even contain sequences without words (Picnic at Hanging Rock, Witness, Dead

Poets Society). As early as in his first critically recognized film, Michael, Weir cuts dialogue to a minimum and replaces it with rock music. The director tries to suggest meaning visually, rather than through dialogue which, in some of his works (e.g., The Last Wave, The Mosquito Coast), weakens the impact of the film. In his best films (Picnic at Hanging Rock, Gallipoli, The Year of Living Dangerously, Witness) he favours nonverbal experience, with meaning implied through the combination of music and image. His films are very photogenic, they appeal to viewers' emotions and, characteristically, their impact is noticeable especially during the first viewing in which feelings dominate over logic.

In his early Australian films, Weir attempts to impede the perception of his works, rendering them more ambiguous and infusing them with multiple implications; he "clears" his works of elements which introduce clarity, and suggests rather than delivers. He works around the subject and avoids ready answers. Thus, his early films resemble collages of images and only from a certain distance can they offer the spectator an impression of delicate wholeness.

The best example of Weir's efforts to present his ideas in this "impressionistic" manner is Picnic at Hanging Rock. He does not employ traditional narrative with cause-effect relationships. Instead, he concentrates on the accompanying facts and skirts the story. This is neither pure chance nor a lack of narrative competence but intentional. For Weir, the narrative seems only to be a pretext to present a theme and to create a mood. In Picnic at Hanging Rock, allegorical and mythical elements are more important than the story itself. Weir achieves a dream-like atmosphere from the scraps of insinuated plots. He creates a world ruled by mystery. The protagonists move in this world as in a dream.

The power of images is intensified by the use of slow motion sequences (e.g., Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Last Wave, Gallipoli, Witness, Year of Living Dangerously, Poets, Fearless), soft focus photography (mainly in Picnic at Hanging Rock and Witness), and superimpositions (Picnic at Hanging Rock, Witness). Intimacy is created by focusing on characters: their faces fill the screen subjugated to the camera angles and movement. Further, the frequent use of zoom shots, in particular in Fearless, creates a flattening of space, drawing attention to central characters. In collaboration with experienced directors of photography (Russell Boyd, John Seale, Allen Daviau and others) Weir creates an oneiric, highly personal atmosphere by portraying the supernatural, the uncanny and the bizarre surfacing through the everyday. He reinforces banal images, and is not afraid of a risky equilibrium between film art and the realm of kitsch.

In order to achieve his unique mood, Weir is not only ready to employ trivialized cinematic devices, but also to use visual stereotypes related to the protagonists' image (e.g., virginal girls in Picnic at Hanging Rock). In his films, the viewer may also sometimes find banal symbolism (e.g., images of Miranda and the swan juxtaposed in Picnic at Hanging Rock, the cave in Dead Poets Society, birds as linking motifs in Picnic and Poets). He mixes "high art" and "popular art," literary and painting influences with popular culture. Weir's originality, however, lies in the renewal and reinforcement of images degenerated into cliches. The recycled images look surprisingly refreshing in his films: he uses them as if they were invented for the first time.

Another important feature of Weir's cinema is his innovative use of the rural Australian landscape. Surprisingly, landscape doesn't play an expected role in his Gothic films. Instead, it is replaced by a house (Homesdale), an apartment (The Plumber), and an isolated country town (The Cars That Ate Paris). Reality is deformed, peopled with grotesque, ambiguous characters. The protagonist tries to survive in this bizarre environment. His only aim is to escape the nightmare and, like his counterpart in the horror genre, to restore normality.

In Picnic At Hanging Rock and Gallipoli, the landscape stands for Australia, is a key to understanding Australia and defines the continent. The awe-inspiring landscape also performs a mythologizing function and is a source of mystery. Weir borrows heavily from the fine and literary arts. In order to depict the landscape effectively, he reinforces existing images and presents his version of Australia: a continent defined by its unique, threatening yet fascinating sunny landscape peopled by characters who dare to tame it.

The dominant role of nature in Picnic at Hanging Rock is replaced by history in Gallipoli and The Year of Living Dangerously. Nonetheless, Archy in Gallipoli seems to be led by the same unexplained magnetic force which takes Miranda under the Hanging Rock. Both die, are transferred into a different realm to become myths. Weir emphasizes this by employing slow motion for the girls' ascent up the rock and a freeze-frame of Archy during his decisive run on the Turkish trenches.

The American films gradually move into an urban setting. After the pastoral landscape in Witness, peopled by the anachronistic Amish, The Mosquito Coast contrasts the ugliness of the rural American landscape with the dangerous beauty of the jungle. The landscape performs only an ornamental function in Dead Poets Society. In his urban American settings, Weir seems to be lost: presentation is superficial and unoriginal (Green Card, Fearless), unless the urban performs the role of a mirror to define a rural community (Philadelphia in Witness).

Music in Weir's films creates the sense of the inexplicable. It also stresses the incongruity of clashing worlds: the use of pan pipe music and Beethoven in Picnic at

Hanging Rock, the tribal drums and rock music in The Plumber, the musical score in Witness which stresses the skewed temporality of the Amish. Music not only comments upon the narrative but also creates a sense of the supernatural. Gheorghe Zamphir's pan-pipe music employed in Picnic at Hanging Rock serves as the best and, arguably, the most well-known example. In his interviews, Weir often emphasizes the importance of music for the atmosphere of his films:

> Storytelling is my trade, my craft. But music is my inspiration; and my goal, my metaphor, to affect people like music. The images should float over you like music, and the experience should be beyond words.[8]

The director is also known for his intelligent incorporation of well-known classical pieces into his films. In this respect, the use of diegetic and nondiegetic music in Gallipoli may serve as a good example. The night before the disastrous slaughter at Gallipoli, Captain Burton listens to the tenor and baritone duet, "Au fond du temple saint" from Georges Bizet's "The Pearl Fishers," on the battered old phonograph in his tent. Tomaso Albinoni's "Adagio in G Minor for Strings and Organ," music full of pathos and sadness, introduced at the film's opening, sets the mood for the film. Later, this musical motif appears so as to heighten the dramatic impact of the scene in which the Anzacs approach their destination. To these familiar classical pieces Jean Michel Jarre's electronic music ("Oxygène") is added, which builds up the tension in the films' race sequences. The use of Albinoni and Bizet by Weir may be undoubtedly compared with Coppola's utilization of Wagner in Apocalypse Now (1979), and Kubrick's use of Richard Strauss in 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968).

As I stated earlier, Weir is not an innovative, ground-breaking author in cinema. Rather, he is a traditional - without negative connotation - filmmaker in both his treatment of the narrative and in visual style. In his investigations of Australian mythology, Weir reconfirms the existing cliches and mythologies. He favours myth-enhancing narratives which reinforce rather than question and challenge existing order. Pat McGilligan states that Weir's films "do not have vitriol or sting; instead they convey great muted feeling and passion. They are not likely to inflict pain, but count on them for strange foreboding and mesmerizing pleasure."[9]

After The Year of Living Dangerously, as Weir shifts from Australian New Wave to Hollywood films, he has deserted Australian subject matters to move to specifically American settings and topics. His tendency towards cliched and sentimental presentation is now paralleled by a strengthening of narratives. The films which follow, more dramatically compact and controlled, share nevertheless the same thematic and stylistic features with their predecessors.

Weir's style is based on a structural opposition that is profoundly ethnographic: the clash between observer and observed, "us" and "them," Western rationality against Eastern/Dreamtime/ Amish mystery organizes his films. With their 1960s messages, they also reflect Weir's own, albeit less than deep, idealism. This is intense, ardent filmmaking - an accurate description of a filmmaker who, above all, values intuition and filmic instinct.

Weir's career is developing and, I hope, he has many films yet to make. His artistic achievements to date already place him among the foremost of his contemporaries. We may see his idealism as naive and old fashioned - only in Weir's cinema, presumably, does idealism have potential when confronted with the victorious procession of pragmatism. Weir's poetic visual style, his passionate romantic sensibility makes him one of the few members of the Dead Poets Society.

NOTES

1. Penelope Houston, The Contemporary Cinema (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), 192.

2. Sandra Hall notes that Weir "is a genius for juxtaposing the odd with the ordinary in a gleeful belief that things are never just as they seem." Sandra Hall, "US Hit Bears Witness to Weir's Genius," Bulletin, 7 May 1985, 86.

3. Weir states: "Most of my films have been left incomplete with the viewer as the final participant: I don't like the didactic approach. One is constantly left wondering and I love when that's done to me in a film." Mathews, 35 mm Dreams: Conversations with Five Directors about the Australian Film Revival (Melbourne: Penguin, 1984), 107.

4. Mathews, ibid., 70.

5. Robert Winer, "Witnessing and Bearing Witness: The Ontogeny of Encounter in the Films of Peter Weir," Images in Our Souls: Cavell, Psychoanalysis and Cinema ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1987), 84.

6. Tania Modleski, Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 137-8.

7. Gary Hentzi, "Peter Weir and the Cinema of New Age Humanism," Film Quarterly 44 (2) 1990-91: 3. Hentzi points out the sensual homoerotic atmosphere surrounding Picnic at Hanging Rock, Gallipoli (but taken without its cultural "mateship" context), The Year of Living Dangerously (Guy Hamilton and Billy Kwan, however, form a different kind of relationship) and Dead Poets Society ("Weir has filled the screen with images of strikingly attractive young men; yet no mention is made of illicit love" (3). Later, however, he admits that this motif is "a figure for a larger and considerably more ambiguous set of issues," (4).

8. Pat McGilligan, "Under Weir and Theroux," Film Comment 22 (6) 1986: 30.

9. Ibid., 23.

FILMOGRAPHY

1967 COUNT VIM'S LAST EXERCISE
(15 minutes, 16mm, black and white)

1968 THE LIFE AND FLIGHT OF THE REV. BUCK SHOTTE
(33 minutes, 16mm, black and white)

1970 MICHAEL (episode in Three to Go)
(31 minutes, 16mm, black and white)

Production company: Commonwealth Film Unit
Production: Gil Brealey
Assistant director: Brian Hannant
Screenplay: Peter Weir
Photography: Kerry Brown
Editing: Wayne Le Clos
Music: The Cleves
Cast:Matthew Burton (Michael), Grahame Bond (Grahame), Peter Colville (Neville Trantor), Georgina West (Georgina), Betty Lucas (Mother), Judy McBurney (Judy)

1970 STIRRING THE POOL
(6 minutes, documentary, 16mm, color)

1971 HOMESDALE
(52 minutes, fiction, 16mm, black and white)

Production company: Experimental Film Fund
Production: Richard Brennan, Grahame Bond
Assistant director: Brian Hannant
Screenplay: Peter Weir, Piers Davies
Photography: Anthony Wallis
Editing: Wayne Le Clos
Music: Grahame Bond, Rory O'Donoghue
Cast: Geoff Malone (Mr. Malfrey), Grahame Bond (Kevin), Kate Fitzpatrick (Miss Greenoak), James Dellit (Manager), Kosta Akon (Chief Robert), Richard Brennam (Robert 1), Peter Weir (Robert 2), Phil Noyce (Neville), Shirley Donald (Matron), James Lear (Mr. Levy), Barry Donelly (Mr. Vaughn)

1972 AUSTRALIAN COLOUR DIARY NO. 43: Three Directions in Australian Pop Music
(10 minutes, documentary, 16mm, color)

Production company: ACFU
Production: Malcolm Otton
Photography: Michael Edols
Editing: Jim Coffey

Sound: Julian Ellingworth

1972 BOAT BUILDING (4 minutes, color)

1972 THE BILLIOND ROOM (6 minutes, color)

1972 THE COMPUTER CENTRE (5 minutes, color)

1972 THE FIELD DAY (5 minutes, color)

1972 TEMPO: AUSTRALIA IN THE 70s
(24 minutes, color, script only; director: Keith Gow)

1972 INCREDIBLE FLORIDAS
(12 minutes, documentary, 35mm, color)

Production company: Film Australia
Production: Malcolm Otton
Screenplay: Peter Weir
Photography: Bruce Hillyard
Editing: Anthony Buckley
Music: Richard Meale

1973 WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GREEN VALLEY
(55 minutes, documentary, 16mm, color)

Production company: Film Australia
Production: Anthony Buckley
Screenplay: Peter Weir
Photography: Nick Ardizzone, Don McAlpine, Ross King, Guy Furner
Editing: Barry Williams

1973 THE FIFTH FACADE
(documentary, co-writer with Keith Gow and Donald Crombie, director: Donald Crombie)

1974 THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS
(91 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Salt Pan Films and Royce Smeal Prod.
Production: Jim McElroy and Hal McElroy
Screenplay: Peter Weir, Keith Gow, Piers Davies. Based on a story by Peter Weir
Cinematography: John McLean
Camera operators: Richard Wallis, Peter James
Editing: Wayne Le Clos
Art director: David Copping
Music: Bruce Smeaton
Assistant director: Hal McElroy
Sound recording: Hen Hammond; Sound mixing: Peter Fenton
Stunt co-ordination: Ken Hammond

Cast: Terry Camilleri (Arthur Waldo), John Meillon (Mayor), Kevin Miles (Dr. Midland), Melissa Jaffer (Beth), Max Gillies (Metcalf), Danny Adcock (Policeman), Bruce Spence (Charlie), Rick Scully (George), Max Phipps (Rev. Mulray), Peter Armstrong (Gorman), Chris Haywood (Daryl), Deryck Barnes (Al Smedley), Charles Metcalfe (Clive Smedley), Joe Burrow (Ganger), Edward Howell (Tringham), Tim Robertson (Les), Herbie Nelson (man in house), Kevin Golsby (insurance man)

1974 FUGUE (short, writer only)

1975 PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK
(115 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Picnic Prod. In ass. with BEF Film Distributors, SAFCO, AFC.
Production: Hal McElroy and Jim McElroy in ass. with Patricia Lovell
Assistant directors: Mark Egerton, Kim Dalton, Ian Jamieson
Screenplay: Cliff Green. Based on the novel by Joan Lindsay (Picnic at Hanging Rock)
Cinematography: Russell Boyd
Camera operator: John Seale; Nature phot.: David Sanderson
Editing: Max Lemon
Art director: David Copping
Music: Bruce Smeaton, "Pan Pipe" by Gheorghe Zamphir
Costumes: Judy Dorsman; Costume consultant: Wendy Weir
Art advicer: Martin Sharp
Sound editing: Greg Bell; Sound recording: Don Connelly

Cast: Rachel Roberts (Mrs. Appleyard), Dominic Guard (Michael Fitzhubert), Anne Lambert (Miranda), Karen Robson (Irma), Margaret Nelson (Sara), Helen Morse (Diane de Poitiers), Vivean Gray (Miss McCraw), John Jarratt (Albert), Kirsty Child (Miss Lumley), Jane Vallis (Marion), Christine Schuler (Edith), Jacki Weaver (Minnie), Anthony Llewellyn-Jones (Tom), Frank Gunnell (Mr. Whitehead), John Fegan (Dr. McKenzie), Wyn Roberts (Sergeant Bumpher), Ingrid Mason (Rosamund), Peter Colingwood (Col. Fitzhubert), Olga Dickie (Mrs. Fitzhubert), Faith Kleinig (cook), Jenny Lovell (Blanche), Janet Murray (Juliana), Martin Vaughan (Ben Hussey), Jack Fegan (Doc McKenzie), Garry McDonald (Jim Jones), Kay Taylor (Mrs. Bumpher), Vivienne Graves, Angela Bencini, Melinda Cardwell, Annabel Powrie, Amanda White, Lindy O'Connell, Verity Smith, Deborah Mullins, Sue Jamieson, Bernadette Bencini, Barbara Lloyd

1975 THREE WORKSHOP FILMS
(28 minutes, color., co-director with Don Crombie and Peter Maxwell)

Production company: The Film and Television School in Sydney
Production: John Morris
Photography: Milton B. Ingerson
Screenplay: Vince O'Donnell, Grant Reed
Editing: Bob Allen

1977 LUKE'S KINGDOM
(TV series, two episodes)

1977 THE LAST WAVE
(106 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Ayer Productions. A McElroy and McElroy Production in ass. with Derek Power, SAFCO, AFC
Production: Hal McElroy and Jim McElroy
Assistant director: John Robertson, Ian Jamieson.
Screenplay: Peter Weir, Tony Morphett and Petru Popescu.
Based on the original idea by Peter Weir
Cinematography: Russell Boyd
Camera operator: John Seale; Additional photography: Ron Taylor, George Greenough, Klaus Jaritz
Art director: Neil Angwin
Editing: Max Lemon
Music: Charles Wain
Sound recording: Don Connolly; Sound mixer: Greg Bell
Special effects: Monty Fieguth, Robert Hilditch
Production design: Goran Warff
Adviser on aboriginal matters: Lance Bennett
Cast: Richard Chamberlain (David Burton), Olivia Hamnett (Annie Burton), David Gulpilil (Chris Lee), Nandjiwarra Amagula (Charlie), Frederick Parslow (Reverend Burton), Vivean Gray (Dr. Whitburn), Walter Amagula (Gerry Lee), Roy Bara (Larry), Cedric Lalara (Lindsey), Morris Lalara (Jacko), Athol Compton (Billy Corman), Hedley Cullen (Judge), Peter Carroll (Michael Zaedler), Michael Duffield (Andrew Potter), Wallas Eaton (morgue doctor), Jo England (Babysitter), John Frawley (Policeman), Jennifer de Greenlaw (Zeadler's secr.), Richard Henderson (prosecutor), Penny Leach (schoolteacher), Merv Lilley, John Meagher, Guido Rametta, Malcolm Robertson, Greg Rowe, Katrina Sedgwick (Sophie Burton), Ingrid Weir (Grace Burton)

1978 THE PLUMBER
(76 minutes, TV feature, color)

Production company: South Australian Film Corporation
Production: Matt Carroll
Screenplay: Peter Weir
Cinematography: David Sanderson
Camera operator: Peter Moss
Art directors: Herbert Pinter, Ken James
Editing: Gerald Turney-Smith
Music: Rory O'Donohue; Sound: Ken Hammond
Production designer: Wendy Weir

Cast: Judy Morris (Jill Cowper), Ivar Kants (Max the Plumber), Robert Coleby (Brian Cowper), Candy Raymond (Meg), Henri Szeps (Department Head), Yiomi Abiodun, Beverley Roberts, Bruce Rosen, Daphne Grey

1979 HEART AND HAND: PETER RUSHFORTH, POTTER
(25 minutes, documentary, color with black and white sequences)

Production company: Crafts Council of Australia
Photography: John Seale
Editing: Bob Cogger
Sound: Don Connolly

1981 GALLIPOLI
(111 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Associated R and R Films
Executive producer: Francis O'Brien
Producers: Robert Stigwood and Patricia Lovell
Assistant producers: Martin Cooper, Ben Gannon
Assistant directors: Mark Egerton, Steve Andrews, Marshall Crosby, Robert Pendlebury, (Egypt) Attef El Taieb
Screenplay: David Williamson. Based on the story by Peter Weir
Cinematography: Russell Boyd
Camera operator: John Seale; Underwater photography: Ron Taylor
Editing: William Anderson
Music: Brian May; Sound recording: Don Connolly,
Design co-ordinator: Wendy Weir
Special effects: Chris Murray, Monty Fieguth, David Hardie, Steve Courtley, Bruce Henderson
Military advicer: Bill Gammage

Cast: Mark Lee (Archy Hamilton), Mel Gibson (Frank Dunne), Bill Hunter (Major Barton), Tim McKenzie (Barney Wilson), David Argue ("Snowy"), Robert Grubb (Billy), Bill Kerr (Uncle Jack), Harold Baigent (Stumpy), Ron Graham (Wallace Hamilton), Charles Yunupingu (Zac), Harold Hopkins (Les McCann), Heath Harris (Stockman), Gerda Nicolson

(Rose Hamilton), Brian Anderson (Angus), Reg Evans (1st official), Jack Giddy (2nd official), Dane Peterson (Announcer), Paul Linkson (Recruiting Officer), Jenny Lovell (Waitress), Steve Dodd (Billy Lionel), Phyllis Burford (Laura), Marjorie Irving (Gran), John Murphy (Dan Dunne), Peter Ford (Lt. Gray), Diane Chamberlain (Anne Barton), Ian Govett (Army Doctor), Geoff Parry (Sgt. Sayers), Clive Bennington (1st English Officer), Giles Holland-Martin (2nd English Officer), Moshe Kedem (Egyptian Shopkeeper), John Morris (Colonel Robinson), Paul Sonkkila (Sniper)

1980 MAN OF THE EARTH
(30 minutes, documentary, color, co-editor only with Robert Coggen; director and screenwriter: P. Butt)

1982 THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY
(115 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: McElroy and McElroy Production. A Freddie Fields presentation. For MGM/UA with development assistance from the Australian Film Commission
Production: Jim McElroy
Assistant directors: Mark Egerton, Chris Webb, Michael Bourchier, (Phillipines crew) Wayne Barry, Ulysses Formanez, Ken Richardson, Robert Woolcott, Jose Angeles
Screenplay: David Williamson, Peter Weir and C.J. Koch. Based on the C.J. Koch's novel The Year of Living Dangerously
Cinematography: Russell Boyd
2nd unit photography: John Seale
Camera operator: Nixon Binney
Editing: William Anderson
Music: Maurice Jarre
Design co-ordinator: Wendy Weir
Costume design: Terry Ryan
Special effects: Danny Dominguez
Cast: Mel Gibson (Guy Hamilton), Sigourney Weaver (Jill Bryant), Linda Hunt (Billy Kwan), Michael Murphy (Pete Curtis), Bembol Roco (Kumar), Noel Ferrier (Wally O'Sullivan), Bill Kerr (Col. Henderson), Paul Sonkkila (Kevin Condon), Kuh Ledesman (Tiger Lily), Cecily Polson (Moira), Domingo Landicho (Hortono), Hermino de Guzman (Immigration Officer), Ali Nur (Ali), Dominador Robridillo (Betjak Man), Mike Emperio (President Sukarno), Bernardo Nacilla (Dwarf), Coco Marantha (Pool Waiter), David Oyang (Hadji), Lito Tolentino (Udin), Mark Egerton (Embassy Aid), Norma Uatuhan

(Ipu)

1985 WITNESS
(112 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Paramount Pictures Corporation
Production: Edward S. Feldman, co-production: David Bombyk
Associate producer: Wendy Weir
Assistant directors: David McGiffert, Pamela Eilerson
Screenplay: Earl W. Wallace, William Kelley. From a story by William Kelley, Pamela Wallace and Earl Wallace
Photography: John Seale
Camera operator: Dan Lerner
Editing: Thom Noble
Music: Maurice Jarre
Production design: Stan Jolley
Special effects: John R. Elliott
Amish advicer: John D. King

Cast: Harrison Ford (John Book), Kelly McGillis (Rachel Lapp), Lukas Haas (Samuel Lapp), Josef Sommer (Schaeffer), Jan Rubes (Eli Lapp), Alexander Godunov (Daniel Hochleitner), Danny Glover (McFee), Brent Jennings (Carter), Angus McInnes (Fergie), Patti LuPone (Elaine), Frederick Rolf (Stoltzfus), Viggo Mortensen (Moses Hochleitner), Ed Crowley (Scheriff), John Garson (Bishop Tchantz), Beverly May (Mrs. Yoder), Timothy Carhart (Zenovich), Sylvia Kauders (Tourist Lady), Marian Swan (Mrs. Schaeffer)

1986 THE MOSQUITO COAST
(119 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: The Saul Zaentz Co.
Executive production: Saul Zaentz
Production: Jerome Hellman; Associative producer: Neville Thompson
Assistant directors: Mark Egerton, Steve Andrews, Philip Patterson, Russ Kneeland
Screenplay: Paul Schrader. Based on the novel by Paul Theroux (The Mosquito Coast)
Cinematography: John Seale
Editing: Thom Noble
Music: Maurice Jarre
Sound recording: Chris Newman; Sound effects: Ann Kroeber
Production design: John Stoddart
Special effects: Larry Cavanaugh (co-ordinator), Bruce Steinheimer (supervisor), Joe Lombardi (consultant)

Cast: Harrison Ford (Allie Fox), Helen Mirren (Mother), River Phoenix (Charlie Fox), Jadrien Steele (Jerry Fox), Hilary Gordon (April Fox), Rebecca Gordon (Clover Fox), Dick O'Neill (Mr. Polski), André Gregory (Rev. Spellgood), Alice Sneed (Mrs. Polski), Tiger Haynes (Mr. Semper), Conrad Roberts (Mr. Hardy), Melanie Boland (Mrs. Spellgood), Martha Plimpton (Emily Spellgood), Jason Alexander (Clerk), William Newman (Captain Smalls), Michael Roberts (Francis Lungley), Tony Vega (Mr. Maywit), Aurora Clavel (Mrs. Maywit), Butterfly McQueen (Ma Kennywick)

1989 **DEAD POETS SOCIETY**
(129 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Touchstone Pictures in ass. with Silver Screen Partners IV
Producers: Steven Haft, Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas
Assistant directors: Alan B. Curtis, B. Thomas Seidman
Screenplay: Tom Schulman
Cinematography: John Seale
Camera operator: Stephen Shank
Editing: William Anderson
Music: Maurice Jarre
Production design: Wendy Stites

Cast: Robin Williams (John Keating), Robert Sean Leonard (Neil Perry), Ethan Hawke (Todd Anderson), Josh Charles (Knox Overstreet), Gale Hansen (Charlie Dalton), Dylan Kussman (Richard Cameron), Allelon Ruggiero (Steven Meeks), James Waterston (Gerald Pitts), Norman Lloyd (Mr. Nolan), Kurtwood Smith (Mr. Perry), Carla Belver (Mrs. Perry), Leon Pownall (McAllister), George Martin (Dr. Hager), Joe Aufiery (Chemistry Teacher, Matt Carey (Hopkins), Kevin Cooney (Joe Danburry), Jane Morre (Mrs. Danburry), Lara Flynn Boyle (Ginny Danburry), Colin Irving (Chet Danburry), Alexandra Powers (Chris Noel), Melora Walters (Gloria), Welker White (Tina), Steve Mathios (Steve), John Cunningham (Mr. Anderson), Debra Mooney (Mrs. Anderson)

1990 GREEN CARD
(108 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: Touchstone Pictures
Production: Peter Weir; Executive producer: Edward S. Feldman
Assistant directors: Alan B. Curtis, Liz Ryan
Cinematography: Geoffrey Simpson;
Camera operator: Ken Ferris
Music: Hans Zimmer
Editing: William Anderson
Production design: Wendy Stites

Cast: Gerard Depardieu (Georges Faure), Andie

MacDowell (Brontë Parrish), Bebe Neuwirth (Lauren), Gregg Edelman (Phil), Robert Prosky (Brontë's Lawyer), Jessie Keosian (Mrs. Bird), Ethan Phillips (Gorsky), Mary Louise Wilson (Mrs. Sheehan), Lois Smith, Conrad McLaren (Brontë's Parents)

1993 FEARLESS
(119 minutes, feature, color)

Production company: A Spring Creek Production. Distributed by Warner Brothers
Production: Paula Weinstein and Mark Rosenberg
Assistant directors: John Rusk
Screenplay: Rafael Yglesias. Based on his novel.
Cinematography: Allen Daviau
Camera operator: Paul C. Babin
Editing: William Anderson
Music: Maurice Jarre
Production design: John Stoddart
Special design consultant: Wendy Stites
Special effects coordinator: Ken Pepiot

Cast: Jeff Bridges (Max Klein), Isabella Rossellini (Laura Klein), Rosie Perez (Carla Rodrigo), Tom Hulce (Brillstein), Dr. Bill Perlman (John Turturro), Benicio Del Toro (Manny Rodrigo), Deirdre O'Connell (Nan Gordon), John De Lancie (Jeff Gordon), Spencer Vrooman (Jonah Klein), Robin Pearson Rose (Sarah), Debra Monk (Alison), Cynthia Mace (Cindy Dickens), Randle Mell (Peter Hummel), Kathryn Rossetter (Jennifer Hummel), Craig Rovere, Doug Ballard (FBI Agents).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS WITH REFERENCES TO WEIR

Beilby, Peter, ed. Australian Motion Picture Yearbook 1980. Sydney: Cinema Papers/NSW Film Corporation, 1980.

_______. Australian Motion Picture Yearbook 1981-82, Sydney: Cinema Papers/NSW Film Corporation, 1983.

Bertrand, Ina, ed. Cinema in Australia. A Documentary History. Kensington: NSW UP 1989.

Bertrand, Ina. Film Censorship in Australia. St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1978.

Bertrand, Ina and Diane Collins. Government and Film in Australia. Sydney: Currency, 1981.

Brand, Simon. The Australian Film Book: 1930-Today. Sydney: Dreamweaver, 1985.

Carroll, John, ed. Intruders in the Bush. The Australian Quest for Identity. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1982.

Dermody, Susan, and Elizabeth Jacka. The Screening of Australia. Anatomy of a Film Industry. Vol.1. Sydney: Currency, 1987.

_______. The Screening of Australia. Anatomy of a National Cinema. Vol.2. Sydney: Currency, 1988.

_______, eds. The Imaginary Industry. Australian Film in the Late 80's. Sydney: AFTRS Publications, 1989. Special issue of Media Information Australia (50) 1988.

Frow, John, Meaghan Morris, eds. Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1993.

Gammage, Bill, David Williamson and Peter Weir. The Story of Gallipoli. Penguin, 1981.

Green, Cliff. Picnic at Hanging Rock. A Film. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1975.

Hall, Ken G. Australian Film: The Inside Story. Sydney: Summit Books, 1980.

Hall, Sandra. Critical Business: The New Australian Cinema in Review. Adelaide: Rigby, 1985.

Halliwell, William K. The Filmgoer's Guide to Australian Film. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1985.

Hamilton, Peter and Sue Mathews. American Dreams: Australian Movies. Sydney: Currency, 1982.

Hutton, Anne, ed. The First Australian History and Film Conference Papers. Sydney: The History and Film Conference and Australian Film and Television School, 1982.

Jennings, Karen. Sites of Difference: Cinematic Representations of Aboriginality and Gender. Melbourne: Australian Film Institute, 1993.

Kelley William and Earl W. Wallace. Witness. New York: Pocket Books, 1985 (the novelization of the screenplay).

Koch, C[hristopher]. J. The Year of Living Dangerously. Melbourne: Nelson, 1978.

Lansell Ross and Peter Beilby, eds. The Documentary Film in Australia. Melbourne: Cinema Papers and Film Victoria, 1982.

Levy, Wayne, Graeme Cutts and Sally Stockbridge, eds. The Second Australian History and Film Conference Papers. Sydney: The History and Film Conference and Australian Film and Television School, 1984.

Lewis Glen. Australian Movies and the American Dream. New York: Praeger, 1987.

Lindsay, Joan. Picnic at Hanging Rock. Penguin, 1976.

_______. The Secret of Hanging Rock. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1987. (Conclusion to the original novel).

Malone, Peter. In Black and White and Colour: Aborigines in Australian Feature Films. A Survey. Richmond, Victoria: Spectrum, 1987.

Mathews, Sue. 35mm Dreams: Conversations with Five Directors about the Australian Film Revival. Melbourne: Penguin, 1984.

McFarlane, Brian. Australian Cinema 1970-1985. Melbourne: Heinemann Australia, 1987.

_______. Words and Images. Australian Novels into Film. Melbourne: Heinemann and Cinema Papers, 1983.

McFarlane, Brian and George Mayer. New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in American and British Film. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Merryweather Louise, ed. Peter Weir's Film of Gallipoli. Film Study Guide. Melbourne: Applied Resources, Education Dept. of Victoria, 1981.

Moran, Albert and Tom O'Regan, eds. An Australian Film Reader. Sydney: Currency, 1985.

_______. The Australian Screen. Melbourne: Penguin, 1989.

Murray, Scott, ed. Australian Film 1978-1992. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1993.

_______. The New Australian Cinema. Melbourne: Nelson and Cinema Papers, 1980.

Myers David. Bleeding Battlers from Ironbark. Australian Myths in Fiction and Film 1890s-1980s. Rockhampton, Queensland: Capricornia Institute, 1987.

Peeters, Theo. Peter Weir and His Films: A Critical Bibliography. Melbourne: Australian Film Institute Research and Information, 1983.

Pike, Andrew and Ross Cooper. Australian Film 1900-1977. A Guide to Feature Film Production. Melbourne: Oxford UP and The Australian Film Institute, 1980.

Popesu, Petru.The Last Wave. (Based on an original idea by Peter Weir). Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1977.

Rattigan, Neil. Images of Australia: 100 Films of the New Australian Cinema. Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1991.

Reade, Eric. The Australian Screen: A Pictorial History of Australian Film Making. Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1975.

_______. History and Heartburn: The Saga of Australian Film 1896-1978. Sydney: Harper and Row, 1979.

Shaffer, Kay. Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition. Sydney: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Shiach, Don. The Films of Peter Weir: Visions of Alternative Realities. London: C. Letts, 1993.

Shirley, Graham and Brian Adams. Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years. Sydney: Angus and Robertson and

Currency, 1983.

Stewart, John. An Encyclopaedia of Australian Film. Sydney: Reed Books, 1984.

Stratton, David. The Avocado Plantation: Boom and Bust in the Australian Film Industry. Sydney: Macmillan, 1990.

_______. The Last New Wave: The Australian Film Revival. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1981.

Theroux, Paul. The Mosquito Coast. Penguin, 1986.

Thoms, Albie. Polemics for a New Cinema. Sydney: Wild and Wooley, 1978.

Tulloch, John. Australian Cinema: Industry, Narrative and Meaning. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982.

_______. Legends on the Screen. The Narrative Film in Australia 1919-1929. Sydney: Currency, 1982.

_______. Conflict and Control in the Cinema. Melbourne: MacMillan, 1977: 201-12.

Turner, Graeme. National Fictions. Literature, Film and the Construction of Australian Narrative. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986.

White, David. Australian Movies to the World. Melbourne: Fontana Australia and Cinema Papers, 1984.

White, Richard. Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1688-1980. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981.

Williamson, Dugald. Authorship and Criticism. Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1989. (Chapter 5: "Local Consumption: 'Peter Weir.'")

Yglesias, Rafael. Fearless. New York: Warner Books, 1993.

VIDEOCASSETTES

Thompson, Peter. Peter Weir--Filmmaker Interview. Sydney: Australian Film and Television School, 1983. 1 videocassette U-matic, 45 minutes, color, recorded: 2 December 1982).

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS ON (OR WITH REFERENCE TO) WEIR

Barber, S.T. The Australian Film Renaissance, 1970 - 1986: An Ideological, Economic and Political Analysis. Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 1988.

Bauer-Lenoir, Virginie. Le Cinema Australien Contemporain, 1975-1988. Reflet d'Une Societe. Ph.D. thesis. Paris: l'Université Paris III, 1992.

Berryman, K. Description and Analysis of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Centre for the study of Educational Communication and Media, La Trobe University, 1980 (Master's coursework papers).

Blonski, Annette. Propositions of the Films of Peter Weir and His Place in Contemporary Australian Cinema. M.A. Preliminary, Monash University, 1983.

Corum Everett Eugene. Tantalizing Ambiguity: The Cinema of Peter Weir. Ph.D. thesis. Kansas: University of Kansas, 1990.

Faulkner, Craig. A Geography on the Screen. Landscape in Australian Narrative Cinema. M.A. thesis. Adelaide: Flinders University of S.A., 1983.

Haltof, Józef Marek. Film and Dream: The Films of Peter Weir. M.A. thesis, Adelaide: Flinders University, 1988.

Hutton, Anne B. Nationalism in Australian Feature Film of the 80s. M.A. thesis, Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1979.

McMullen, Wayne Joseph. A Rhetorical Analysis of Peter Weir's *Witness*. Ph.D. dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1989.

O'Regan, Tom A. The Politics of Representation. An analysis of the Australian Film Revival. Ph.D. dissertation, Sydney: Griffith University, 1985.

Szybowska, Violetta. *Piknik pod Wiszącą Skałą* Petera Weira - Próba analizy (Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* - An Attempt at Analysis. M.A. thesis. Cracow: Jagiellonian University, 1991.

INTERVIEWS WITH PETER WEIR

Dempsey, Michael. "Inexplicable Feelings: An Interview with

Peter Weir." Film Quarterly 33 (4) 1980: 2-11.

"Dialogue on Film: Peter Weir." American Film 11 (5) 1986: 13-15.

Dowling, Terry, and George Mannix. "Peter Weir--Master of Unease (An Interview with Peter Weir)." Science Fiction--A Review of Speculative Literature 3 (1) 1980: 7-27.

Fonda-Bonardi, Claudia and Peter. "The Birth of a Nation: An Interview with Peter Weir." Cineaste 11 (4) 1982: 41-2.

"I Felt Somehow I Was Touching History." Literature/Film Quarterly 9 (4) 1981: 213-17.

Magill, Marcia. "Peter Weir: An Interview." Films in Review 32 (8) 1981: 474-9.

McFarlane Brian and Tom Ryan. "Peter Weir: Towards the Centre." Cinema Papers 34 (1981): 323-8.

McGilligan, Pat. "Under Weir and Theroux." Film Comment 6 (1986): 23-32.

Tulich, Katherine. "Peter Weir: Interview." Cinema Papers 80 (1990): 6-10.

GENERAL ARTICLES ON (OR WITH REFERENCE TO) WEIR

Altman, Dennis. "The Myth of Mateship." Meanjin 46 (2) 1987: 163-72.

Bachann, Gideon. "Films in Australia." Sight and Sound 46 (1) 1976-1977: 32-36.

Balajee, B. N. "The Fusion of Myth and Topicality in Christopher Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously*." The Literary Criterion 23 (3) 1988: 34-37.

Barret, Donald. "The Mythology of Pan and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*." Southerly 3 (1982): 299-308.

_______. "Picnicking with E. M. Forster, Joan Lindsay et al." Literature in North Queensland 15 (1) 1987: 79-86.

Bertrand, Ina. "'National Identity,' 'National History,' 'National Film:' The Australian Experience." Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 4 (2) 1984: 179-187.

Brennan, Richard. "Peter Weir." Cinema Papers January 1974: 16-17.

Clancy, Jack. "Australian Films and Fantasies." Meanjin 2 (1979): 193-205.

_______. "Music in the Films of Peter Weir." Journal of Australian Studies 41 (1994): 24-34.

_______. "The Triumph of Mateship: The Failure of Australian War Films Since 1970." Overland December 1986: 4-8.

Collier, Gordon and Geoffrey Davis. "The Iconography of Landscape in Australian Film." Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada 6 (1991): 27-41.

Crofts, Stephen. "Shifting Paradigms in the Australian Historical Film." East-West Film Journal 5 (2) 1991: 1-15.

Daniel, Helen. "The Aborigine in Australian Fiction: Stereotype to Archetype." Modern Fiction Studies 27 (1) 1981: 45-60.

Dermody, Susan and Elizabeth Jacka. "The Australian Film Industry and the Holy Empire." Filmnews 13 (6) 1983.

Film na Świecie (Poland) 295-296, 1983 (An Issue on Australian Cinema).

Fotheringham, Richard. "Sport and Nationalism on Australian Stage and Screen: From *Australia Felix* to *Gallipoli*." Australasian Drama Studies 1 (1) 1982: 65-88.

Frost, Alan. "On Finding Australia: Mirages, Mythic Images, Historical Circumstances," Australian Literary Studies 12 (4) 1986: 482-98.

Gibson, Ross. "Camera Natura: Landscape in Australian Feature Films." Framework 22-23 (1983): 47-51.

Greenfield, Pierre. "Everything Happens at Its Appointed Time." Movietone News 62-63 1979: 8-10.

Haltof, Marek. "Etnograficzne przeżycia: Peter Weir i jego filmy." Film na Świecie 381 (1991): 5-16.

_______. "O kinie onirycznym Petera Weira." Studia Filmoznawcze X. ed. Jan Trzynadlowski, 1991: 231-43.

Hartigan, Karelisa V. "Artemis in South Australia: Classical Allusions in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*." Classical and

Modern Literature: A Quarterly 11 (1) 1990: 93-98.

Henderson, Gerard. "The ANZAC Legend after *Gallipoli*." Quadrant 26 (7) 1982: 62-4.

Hentzi, Gary. "Peter Weir and the Cinema of New Age Humanism." Film Quarterly 44 (2) 1990/1991: 2-12.

Hickling-Hudson, Anne. "White Construction of Black Identity in Australian Films About Aborigines." Literature/Film Quarterly 18 (4) 1990: 263-75.

Hutton, Anne. "Nationalism in Australian Cinema." Cinema Papers 26 (1980): 96-100; 152-3.

Jacobs, J.U. "The Vanishing American in Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast*. CRUX: A Journal on the Teaching of English 24 (2) 1990: 3-15.

Kirby, Joan. "Old Orders, New Lands: The Earth Spirit in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*." Australian Literary Studies 8 (3) 1978: 255-268.

Koch, C.J. "Crossing the Gap: Asia and the Australian Imagination," Quadrant 25 (1-2) 1981: 4-9.

______. (1980) "Literature and Cultural Identity" The Tasmanian Review 4: 2-6.

Lawson, Sylvia. "Good Taste at Hanging Rock: Some Notes on the Death, Re-birth and Still Birth of Australian Feature Filmmaking." Conflict and Control in the Cinema John Tulloch (ed.), Melbourne: MacMillan, 1977: 201-12.

Luebke, Steven R. "Self's Dark Circle: The Home-Founding Journey in Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast* and Stephen Minot's *Ghost Images*." Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction 30 (4) 1989: 227-238.

Maes-Jelinek, Hena. "History and the Mythology of Confrontation in the *Year of Living Dangerously*." Kunapipi 8 (1) 1986: 27-35.

McFarlane, Brian. "Peter Weir." Australian Motion Picture Yearbook 1983 eds Peter Beilby and Ross Lansell. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson and Roscope, 1984: 237-248.

_______. "The Films of Peter Weir." Insert in Cinema Papers 26 (1980): 24pp.

McKernan, Susan. "C.J. Koch's Two-Faced Vision." Meanjin 44 (4) 1985: 432-439.

Moore, Catriona, and Stephen Muecke. "Racism and the Representation of Aborigines in Film." Australian Journal of Cultural Studies 2 (1) 1984: 36-53.

Nichols, R. "Peter Weir." Lumiere 21 (1973): 4-7.

O'Neill, Terence. "Literary Cousins: Nuns in Jeopardy and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*." Australian Literary Studies 10 (3) 1982: 375-378.

O'Regan, Tom. Australian Film Making: Its Public Circulation." Framework 22-23 (1983): 31-36.

Pike, Andrew. "Australian Feature Films: Towards a Local Cinema." Meanjin 38 (1979): 206-212.

_______. "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films," Meanjin 36 (4) 1977: 592-599

Purdon, Noel. "Under Western Eyes. Notes towards the Australian Cinema." Cinema Papers November-December 1975: 216-219.

Ram, Alur Janaki. "Chris Koch, India and *Across the Sea Wall*: Some Observations." The Literary Criterion 23 (3) 1988: 24-33.

Rattigan, Neil. "*Crocodile Dundee*: Apotheosis of the Ocker." Journal of Popular Film and Television 15 (4) 1988: 148-155.

Rohdie, Sam. "The Australian State: A National Cinema." Framework 22-23 (1983): 28-30.

Roskies, D. M. "A View of Asia from Down Under: The Politics of Re-Presentation in *The Year of Living Dangerously*." World Literature Written in English 29 (2) 1989: 35-50.

Scheckter, John. "The Lost Child in Australian Fiction." Modern Fiction Studies 27 (1) 1981: 61-72.

Stanisławski, Krzysztof. "Czas snu. O tajemniczości poetyki Petera Weira." Kino 4 (1985): 33-38.

Thieme, John. "Christopher J. Koch, Interview." Kunapipi 8 (1) 1986: 19-26.

_______. "Re-mapping the Australian Psyche: The Asian Novels of C.J. Koch." Southerly 4 (1987): 451-456.

Tiffin, Helen. "Asia and the Contemporary Australian Novel." Australian Literary Studies 11 (1984): 468-179.

_______. "Asia, Europe and Australian Identity: The Novels of Christopher Koch." Australian Literary Studies 10 (3) 1982: 326-335.

Toeplitz, Jerzy. "Australijskie kino. Dzień dzisiejszy i perspektywy jutra." Kino (7) 1977: 41-47; also in: Film na Świecie (1) 1979: 84-92.

_______. "Krótka historia australijskiego filmu." Kino Antypodów. Kraków: Federacja DKF, 1983: 7-53.

Turner, Graeme. "Breaking the Frame: The Representation of Aborigines in Australian Film." Aboriginal Culture Today ed. Anna Rutherford, Dangaroo Press/Kunapipi, 1988: 135-145.

Wills, David. "Antipodean Semiotics: 'French Theory' in Australia and the Practice of Australian Cinema." Commonwealth Essays and Studies 6 (2) 1984: 95-103.

Winer, Robert. "Witnessing and Bearing Witness: The Ontogeny of Encounter in the Films of Peter Weir," Images in Our Souls: Cavell, Psychoanalysis and Cinema ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan, Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 1987: 82-108.

Yong, Margaret. "Explorations in the Heart of Darkness: Turning Landscape into Art in Slipstream and *The Year of Living Dangerously*." Discharging the Canon: Cross-Cultural Readings in Literature ed. P. Hyland. Singapore: Singapore UP, 1986: 10-37.

ARTICLES ON INDIVIDUAL FILMS

GOTHIC FILMS

Brown, Geoff. "The Cars That Ate Paris." Sight and Sound 44 (3) 1975: 192.

Clancy, Jack. "The Plumber." Cinema Papers 23 (1979): 569: 70.

[Flaus, John.]. "The Cars That Ate Paris." Cinema Papers July 1974: 274-5.

Glenn, Gordon and Scott Murray. "*The Cars That Ate Paris*: Production Report." Cinema Papers January 1974: 18-26.

Haltof, Marek. "Variation on Nightmare: Peter Weir and His

Early Oneiric Films." Leopards: Polish Cracow-Silesian School of Film Semiotics and Poetics. An Anthology ed. Jeff Bernard and Waclaw M. Osadnik, Muenster: Austrian Semiotic Society Publishers (forthcoming 1995).

Kinder, Marsha. "The Plumber." Film Quarterly 32 (4) 1979: 17-21.

Nicholls, Rod. "Peter Weir." Lumiere 21 (1973): 4-7.

Perkins, Bill. "Peter Weir's *Michael*." [inludes "Notes on the making of Michael by the director Peter Weir"] Mass Media Review 7 (1) 1974: 12-17.

"Stan" [R. Stanley]. "The Cars That Ate Paris." Variety 26 June 1974: 120.

Strick, Philip. "The Cars That Ate Paris." Monthly Film Bulletin 496 (1974): 101-2.

Wilson, David. "The Cars That Ate Paris." Sight and Sound 44 (3) 1975: 192-3.

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

Bassan, R. "Pique-nique à Hanging Rock." Ecran 58 (1977): 51-2.

Bonneville, L. "Pique-nique à Hanging Rock." Séquences 23 (91) 1978: 192-3.

Combs, Richard. "Picnic at Hanging Rock." Monthly Film Bulletin 43 (511) 1976: 196-7.

Craven, Jenny. "Picnic at Hanging Rock." Films and Filming 23 (3) 1976: 31-2.

Crittenden, Anne. "*Picnic at Hanging Rock*: A Myth and Its Symbols." Meanjin 35 (2) 1976: 167-74.

Dawson, J. "Picnic Under Capricorn." Sight and Sound 45 (2) 1976: 83.

Garbicz, Adam. "Kryształ Petera Weira." Kino 7 (1979): 48-53.

Ginnane, A.I, and Scott Murray. "Producing *Picnic*: Pat Lovell." Cinema Papers March/April 1976: 298-301.

Haltof, Marek. "A Dream Within a Dream." S--European Journal for Semiotic Studies 2 (1) 1990: 79-93 (also on The

Last Wave).

Hunter, Ian. "Corsetway to Heaven: Looking back at *Picnic at Hanging Rock*." Cinema Papers March-April 1976: 371. Also published in Arena 41 1976: 9-12.

Jankun, Mariola. "*Piknik pod Wiszącą Skałą*--o mitycznej przestrzeni dzieła." Kino 4 (1984): 37-41.

Milne, Tom. "Picnic at Hanging Rock." Sight and Sound 45 (4) 1976: 257.

Murray, Scott. "Picnic at Hanging Rock." Cinema Papers November-December 1975: 264.

Novak, Glenn D; Myles P. Breen. "Anti-Melodramatic Realism and Narrative Ambiguity in Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*." West Georgia College Review 20 (1990): 1-14.

Roginsky, Ed. "Picnic at Hanging Rock." Film Quarterly 32 (4) 1979: 22-26.

Wells, Jeffrey. "Picnic at Hanging Rock." Films in Review 30 (5) 1979: 22.

Wertenstein, Wanda. "Niewyjaśniona tajemnica." Kino 5 (1977): 46-47.

THE LAST WAVE

Boyd Russell. "Photographing *The Last Wave*." American Cinematographer 59 (4) 1978: 352-5.

Clancy, Jack. "The Last Wave." Cinema Papers 15 (1978): 259.

Combs, Richard. "The Last Wave." Sight and Sound 47 (2) 1978: 121-2.

Gow, Gordon. "The Last Wave." Films and Filming 24 (7) 1978: 34.

Mitchell, Robert. "The Last Wave." Magill's Survey of Cinema: Vol. 3. ed. Frank N. Magill. Englewood Cliffs, New York, 1981: 1325-9.

Pulleine, Tim. "The Last Wave." Monthly Film Bulletin 45 (531) 1978: 66-7.

Routt, William D. "Are You a Fish? Are You a Snake?: An Obvious Lecture and Some Notes on *The Last Wave*."

Continuum 8 (2) 1994: 215-231.

Zawojski, Piotr. "Świat jako projekcja świadomości. *Ostatnia fala*." Szwenk 3 (1985): 11-21.

GALLIPOLI

Adam, Phillip. *Gallipoli*: The Great Australian Love Story." The Age (Australia) 22 August 1981: 24.

Beaver, Jim. "Gallipoli." Films in Review 32 (8) 1981: 493-94.

Buchbinder, David. "Mateship, *Gallipoli* and the Eternal Masculine." Representation, Discourse and Desire: Contemporary Australian Culture and Critical Theory. ed. Patrick Fuery. Longman Cheshire, 1994: 115-137.

Dobrez, Livio and Pat. "Old Myths and New Delusions: Peter Weir's Australia." Kunapipi 4 (2) 1982: 61-75.

Freebury, Jane. "Screening Australia: *Gallipoli*--A Study of Nationalism on Film." Media Information Australia 43 (1987): 5-8.

Haltof, Marek. "Budowanie narodu: *Gallipoli* Petera Weira." Kino 9 (1990): 11-14.

_______. "In Quest of Self-Identity: *Gallipoli*, Mateship and the Construction of Australian National Identity," Journal of Popular Film and Television 21 (1) 1993: 27-36.

Jaehne, Karen. "Gallipoli." Cineaste 11 (4) 1982: 40-3.

Lawson, Sylvia. "*Gallipoli*: Picnic at the Pyramids." Filmnews 11/12 (1981): 11.

Lohrey, Amanda. "Australian Mythologies: *Gallipoli*--Male Innocence as a Marketable Commodity." Island 9 (10) 1982: 29-34.

McFarlane, Brian. "Gallipoli." Cinema Papers 33 (1981): 20-21.

Pym, John. "Gallipoli." Monthly Film Bulletin 48 (575) 1981: 244-245.

Rohdie, Sam. "*Gallipoli*: Peter Weir and an Australian Art Cinema." An Australian Film Reader. eds Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan. Sydney: Currency, 1985: 194-7.

_______. "*Gallipoli* as World Camera Fodder." Arena 60 (1982): 36-42.

Travers, T.M.E. "*Gallipoli*--Film and the Tradition of Australian History." Film and History 1 1984.

Turner, Adrian. "Gallipoli." Films and Filming 327 (1981): 33.

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Durham, Carolyn A. "Visual Politics in *The Year of Living Dangerously*: To See or Not To See." Perspectives on Contemporary Literature 11 (1985): 117-125.

_______. "*The Year of Living Dangerously*. Can Vision be a Model for Knowledge?." Jump Cut 30 (1985): 6-7.

Ehrlich, Linda C., and David Dungan, "*The Year of Living Dangerously*: An East-West Dialectic." New Orleans Review 19 (3-4) 1992: 118-124.

Elitzik, Paul. "The Year of Living Dangerously." Cineaste 13 (2) 1984: 43-5.

Enker, Debi. "The Year of Living Dangerously." Cinema Papers 42 1983: 64-5.

MacBean, James Roy. "Watching the Third World Watchers." Film Quarterly 37 (3) (1984): 3-13.

Roddick, Nick. "The Day of Living Dangerously: Indonesia Sept. 30, 1965." Monthly Film Bulletin 593 (1983): 148-49.

_______. "The Year of Living Dangerously." Monthly Film Bulletin 593 (1983): 147-8.

Spring, Lori. "The Other Dream: *The Year of Living Dangerously*." CineAction 3/4 1986: 58-71.

Sragow, Michael. "*The Year of Living Dangerously*: Daring Cinematic Shadow-Play." Rolling Stone 389 (1983): 38.

Zarębski, Konrad J. (ed.) "Rok niebezpiecznego życia." Filmowy Serwis Prasowy 9 (1985): 14-18.

WITNESS

Bichard, Robert S. "*Witness*--John Seale ASC." American

Cinematographer 4 (1986): 74-8.

Chanko, K.M. "Witness." Films in Review 4 (1985): 245-6.

Combs Richard. "Witness." Monthly Film Bulletin 52 (616) 1985: 166-7.

Hansen, Linda. "*Witness*: A New Image of Nonviolence in Popular Film." Journal of Popular Film and Television 14 (3) 1986: 136-141.

Hostetter, Robert. "A Controversial *Witness*." The Christian Century 102 (1985): 341-2.

Kael, Pauline. "Plain and Simple: *Witness*." The New Yorker 25 February 1985: 78-81.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "Witness." The New Republic 192 (7) 1985: 24.

Kolker, Robert Phillip. "Witness." Cinema Papers 51 (1985): 82-3.

McGowan, John P. "Looking at the (Alter)natives: Peter Weir's *Witness*." Chicago Review 35 (3) 1986: 36-47.

Roddick, Nick. "Among the Amish." Sight and Sound 54 (3) 1985: 221-2.

Samsonowska, Hanna. "Utwór na bas i viola d'amore." Kino 11 (1985): 47-8.

Seger, Linda. "On the Road to the Academy Award: A Case Study of the Rewrite of *Witness*," (chapter 11 in:) Making a Good Script Great, New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1987: 179-188.

Sragow, Michael. "Bearing Witness." Film Comment 21 (1985): 5-8.

THE MOSQUITO COAST

Andrews, Terry L. "The Mosquito Coast." Magill's Cinema Annual 1987. A Survey of the Films of 1986. ed. Frank N. Magill. Pasadena, Englewood Cliffs: Salem, 1987: 307-13.

Bawer, Bruce. "Life with Father." The American Spectator 20 (2) 1987: 33-5.

Buckley, Michael. "The Mosquito Coast," Films in Review 38

(2) 1987: 103-4.

Combs, Richard. "The Mosquito Coast." Monthly Film Bulletin 54 (637) 1987: 52-3.

Connolly, Keith. "The Mosquito Coast." Cinema Papers 61 (1987): 35.

Haltof, Marek. "Nowy Weir?" Kino 6 (1987): 48-9.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "The Mosquito Coast." The New Republic 195 (25) 1987:26.

Lee, Nora. "*The Mosquito Coast*: A Jungle Utopia Gone Awry." American Cinematographer 68 (2) 1987: 60-5.

Rafferty, Terrence. "The Mosquito Coast." The Nation 243 (20) 1986: 683-4.

DEAD POETS SOCIETY

Bawer, Bruce. "Poetry in Motion." The American Spectator 22 (8) 1989: 39-40.

Carroll, John. "*Dead Poets Society* and Our Times." Quadrant 34 (3) 1990: 37-41.

Carton, Evan. "Better Dead Than Read: The Society of Poets." Tikkun 4 (6) 1989: 64-7.

Combs, Richard. "Dead Poets Society." Monthly Film Bulletin 6 (668) 1989: 272-3.

Delia, Mary, Alice. "*Dead Poets Society*: Uncritically Acclaimed." Works and Days: Essays in the Socio-Historical Dimensions of Literature and the Arts 9 (1) 1991: 91-96.

Geduld, Harry M. "Seize the Day?" The Humanist, September/ October 1989: 41-2.

Haltof, Marek. "Poezja jest dobra na wszystko." Kino 11 (1989): 47-8.

Heilman, Robert B. "The Great-Teacher Myth." The American Scholar, Summer 1989: 417-423.

Kael, Pauline. "The Current Cinema: Stonework." The New Yorker 19 (1989): 70-1.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "Boys' Lives." The New Republic 200 (26)

1989: 28-9.

L[uby], Barbara. "Dead Poets Society." Filmnews 19 (6) 1989: 12-3.

McFarlane, Brian. "Dead Poets Society." Cinema Papers 75 (1989): 52-3.

Owczarek Małgorzata. "Życiem jest kino, życiem stała się poezja." Konkurs 1 (1990): 17-19.

Rooks, Pamela R. "Woo Who? Exclusion of Otherness in *Dead Poets Society*." Australian Journal of Communication 18 (2) 1991: 75-83.

Scheck, F. "Dead Poets Society." Films in Review 15 (12) 1989: 617-18.

Seidenberg, Robert. "Dead Poets Society." American Film 14 (9) 1989: 56.

Simon, John. "The Red, Red Robin Comes Blabbin' Along." National Review September 15 (1989): 54-5.

Sobolewski, Tadeusz. "Musicie nauczyć się latać." Dialog 3 (414) 1991: 82-92.

Spitz, Ellen Handler. "Carpe Diem, Carpe Mortam: Reflections on *Dead Poets Society*. Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities 11 (3) 1992: 19-31.

GREEN CARD

Glaessner, Verina. "Green Card." Monthly Film Bulletin 58 (586) 1991: 79-80.

Hearty, Kitty Bowe, "French Connection," Premiere 4 (6) 1991: 59-62.

Jacka, Liz. "Green Card." Filmnews 21 (1) 1991: 14.

Mayer, Geoff. "Green Card." Cinema Papers 82 (1991): 53-54.

Szczepański, Tadeusz. "Znowu zwycieżają daltoniści." Film na Świecie 391 (1991): 63-66.

FEARLESS

Fisher, Bob. "*Fearless* Explores Emotional Aftermath of Fateful Flight." American Cinematographer 74 (11) 1993:

40-51.

Luby, Barbara. "Fearless." Filmnews 23 (5) 1994: 12-13.

Murray, Scott. "Fearless." Cinema Papers 100 (1994): 67-68.

Płażewski, Jerzy. "Co dzieje się potem?" Kino (12) 1994: 27.

Rafferty, Terrence. "After the Crash." The New Yorker October 25, 1993: 120-22.

Schickel, Richard. "A Question of Mortality - *Fearless* directed by Peter Weir." Time 142 (16) 1993: 98-102.

Simon, John. "Believe It Who Will." National Review November 29, 1993: 69-71.